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Marion Erb Devlin

WOMEN'S NEWS EDITOR: VALLEJO TIMES-HERALD, 1931-1978

With an Introduction by
Mary Ellen Leary

Interviews Conducted by
Suzanne B. Riess
in 1991

Underwritten by the Endowment of the Class of '31
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Marion Devlin at home.

Photographed 1991 by Suzanne Riess

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Introduction by Mary Ellen Leary, political writer.

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PREFACE

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of our graduation from the University of California at Berkeley, the Class of 1931 made the decision to present its alma mater with an endowment for an oral history series to be titled "The University of California, Source of Community Leaders." The Class of 1931 Oral History Endowment provides a permanent source of funding for an ongoing series of interviews by the Regional Oral History Office of The Bancroft Library.

The commitment of the endowment is to carry out interviews with persons related to the University who have made outstanding contributions to the community, by which is meant the state or the nation, or to a particular field of endeavor. The memoirists, selected by a committee set up by the class, are to come from Cal alumni, faculty, and administrators. The men and women chosen will comprise an historic honor list in the rolls of the University.

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A Law Professor's Career: Teaching, Private Practice, and Legislative Representative, 1934 to 1989, an interview with Adrian Kragen.

Women's News Editor: Vallejo Times-Herald, 1931-1978, an interview with Marion Devlin.

These six oral histories illustrate the strength and skills the University of California has given to its sons and daughters, and the diversity of ways that they have passed those gifts on to the wider community. We envision a lengthening list of University-inspired community leaders whose accounts, preserved in this University of California, Source of Community Leaders Series, will serve to guide students and scholars in the decades to come.

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INTRODUCTION--by Mary Ellen Leary

In her modest way Marion Devlin would have one believe that her fifty years as a newspaper woman, most of them as woman's editor of the Vallejo Times-Herald, merely reflected middle America: an unpretentious chronicle of life in a small town that happened to be in California. Of course Vallejo was no ordinary small town. Its pulse responded to the tempo of activities at Mare Island. At this Navy base employment, social events, important arrivals and departures, zoomed or declined according to the nation's military mission, and these framed Vallejo's public life and social activity. Compact in geography and well under its present 100,000 in population, Vallejo was an unusually congenial community.

That is the Vallejo Marion Devlin looked out upon, absorbed in reporting its activities. But in her work as news writer and news editor Marion Devlin was, in her own right, an active participant in the most singular change in American society since the Civil War: the evolving woman's movement.

Through the period from World War I and the Depression, through World War II, and until this final decade of the century, women journalists, whether aware or not of their impact, have been dynamic factors in this movement. Their own professionalism represented a new place women could make for themselves in public life. Their by-lines gave daily proof of their competitive ability.

Beyond that, their news sense drew attention to changes in the activities and interests of women. By reporting women's expanding horizons and new challenges, these journalists reinforced change and brought about community understanding and acceptance of change. They had a major role in reshaping society by the news they chose to write about.

As a result women became, in news accounts, no longer social mannequins or symbols of domesticity. As Kathleen Cassidy Doyle, long-time woman's editor of the San Francisco Examiner, put it: "The press began to see women as people, as individuals, not as domestic stereotypes. Their individuality came to be recognized."

Even in reporting the ordinary social events that comprised much of Vallejo's women's news, Marion Devlin recognized and recorded such change. For instance, when she first began reporting, just out of the University of California at Berkeley in 1931, women's clubs in Vallejo were virtually all auxiliaries to men's clubs. Some sixty years ago it seemed adequate justification that women should meet as subsidiaries of men's meetings and should center their talents on support for the objectives of men's organizations, such as the Moose, the Red Men, the

Knights of Columbus.

But gradually change came. College graduates formed clubs among themselves. Next, women began organizing around their interests: to support hospitals or school health programs or care for the elderly. The League of Women Voters drew women into a new political awareness. Devoted at first to teas and luncheons as fund-raisers for favored causes, women next became participants. They worked at the library or museum as volunteers, or actively put together drama groups, or served at hospital admission desks. News accounts reflected the change. "It was a very gradual shift," Marion recalls.

The newspaper life, with its chance to observe and report on the whole of society, was Marion's goal from her earliest school days. When she graduated from Cal in 1931, she aimed to go east to study journalism in graduate school. Then came the offer of an immediate job on the Vallejo paper. She took it as a bridge, a learning experience until she might pursue further study. But she stayed on the bridge. Experience proved study enough.

As the pages of her oral history reveal, Vallejo provided a rich experience. By no means was she confined to the old-fashioned "women's desk." Her intelligence and her writing and editing skills led to varied assignments. Managing editor Wyman Riley often used her to fill staff vacancies. She handled a wide range of general reporting, and on two occasions served a stint as city editor. She edited, did lay-out, and wrote the bulk of many special issues marking major national or local events. With her own staff of reporters, and an office on Mare Island, she prepared the paper's special edition marking Mare Island's 100th year. It was the largest single newspaper issue Vallejo ever had, and one that brought acclaim from Washington.

One turning point for women in Vallejo may have been when Marion changed and expanded the Sunday women's section. Moving beyond club news and luncheon accounts, she added reports on art and music events in the whole Bay Area, book reviews and "inquiring reporter" stories that were in-depth features. It meant a significant expansion in the interests of her readers.

The scope and thoroughness of her coverage, and the lilting good humor that gave a special quality to her writing, helped knit the community of Vallejo together. Through interviews, through her own travels, her openness to new ideas, she broadened the viewpoint of those who, without her writing, might have been provincial.

The place Marion made for herself in Vallejo was recognized affectionately at her retirement. It was the men's clubs and Chamber of Commerce which organized a banquet in her honor in the town's largest

hall. Attendance was so large that some two-hundred had to be turned away for lack of space.

Marion's career flourished in a changing news room environment. It came at a historical turning point in journalism, just after World War I and through the Depression, when college-educated women wanting a share in life beyond domesticity turned to the burgeoning writing field they saw about them every day, the newspapers.

Just to illustrate how her work on the Vallejo paper was of a pattern then emerging in the newspaper world, it is interesting to glance at the roster of her fellow journalists in the Bay Area, women she knew, joined in covering stories, shared experiences with. Their readership in some cases was larger, but their work, like hers, was to chronicle their times and their scene with accuracy.

Most of them, like Marion, moved into their careers right out of college. Elinor Cogswell graduated from Stanford in 1918 and got one of only two reporters' posts on the then-fledgling Palo Alto Times. She grew in ability as it grew in circulation. Made editor in 1938, she held that rank until she died in 1983. Jane Eshleman Conant wrote for The Daily Cal as a student at Berkeley and stepped right into city-side reporting for the Oakland Post-Inquirer, then to the San Francisco Call-Bulletin, and on to The Examiner. Through forty-three years she was enormously respected, not only as a reporter but for a rare talent at re-write.

It wasn't always easy. Newspaper editors balked at a female presence, fearing assignments would be limited. Katherine Pinkham Harris, with a journalism degree from the University of Wisconsin, had to battle for acceptance at every step. For ten years she worked on various papers, including the Kansas City Star, but when she sought a job with Associated Press they objected that they would not be able to assign a woman overseas. Tenacious, she finally got hired. But she only got overseas by taking a leave and going to Europe on her own. At that point they accepted her in the Paris bureau. For twenty-five years she worked for AP, many of those years in the San Francisco bureau, opening the door for other women to follow, such as Peg Simpson, who started in San Francisco and moved on to Washington.

Mildred Schroeder Hamilton began working on various small papers, one of them Marion Devlin's Vallejo Times-Herald, during an interval when Marion was acting city editor. Mildred found a spot in the San Francisco INS bureau and in the late fifties moved to The Examiner, so committed and so fast at gathering facts that she was wretched if a day passed when she did not have a story in the paper.

Elinor Hayes started with the Woodland Democrat in 1927, and later became one of the Oakland Tribune's top reporters, noted for her coverage of trials and her gripping writing. She worked thirty-one years on The Tribune, and added more reporting stints after retirement on the northern California coast, so she could claim a career of sixty-three years. Most of these early women spent a lifetime at their typewriters.

It is noteworthy that many of the outstanding San Francisco women reporters worked on The Examiner at the direction of Kathleen Doyle, through two periods when she was women's editor. She began in 1934, on graduation from Stanford, quit when her children came along, and then returned in the forties and remained as editor until 1967 when she left to join the Peace Corps in South America.

Some women especially relished assignments far from the feminine world. For instance, Mary Crawford, who covered Marin County for San Francisco News, became the area's top expert on San Quentin prison. Caroline Anspacher, for years the best-known feature writer on The Chronicle, openly despised the women's section, with its attention to teas, fashions, food and follies. She refused to write for it except when dragooned into covering society's attire at opera or symphony openings. Another outstanding Chronicle reporter, not so recalcitrant about assignments, was Ruth Waldo Newhall, wife of The Chronicle's imaginative and sometimes puckish editor, Scott Newhall.

Some women moved easily, as Marion Devlin did, between women's pages and general assignments, and women's news was sharpened by the experience. Frances Moffat, who landed on The Examiner city staff right out of Stanford, trained on fires, murders, political meetings, and the general grist of city-side reporting, where she learned to pursue a story with special persistence. She brought this investigative skill with her when she joined the women's section, and for years her inquiring mind provoked lively and thoughtful stories, adding breadth to that paper's concept of news important to women.

Helen Civelli Brown was another city-side reporter who moved (on San Francisco News) to become woman's editor. Another Examiner star on the woman's pages, Caroline Drewes, wrote interviews, travel accounts, reports on meetings and on social trends, with such sensitivity and style that she added a wide readership among men. Hazel Holly won such recognition with her stories in The Examiner woman's section that she became one of the early women to be accepted at Harvard as a Nieman Fellow, a privilege I also shared while covering political affairs for The News.

Marion has remarked that the end of World War II brought a sudden burst of femininity in the news. Suppressed through the war years, interest in fashions, enthusiasm for the new fad "cocktail parties,"

attention to personal appearance, all surged to a new level of reader interest.

Today newspapers serve women with a wide range of subjects: straight news, multiple pages on food, expanded attention to art, music, ballet, theater and books. If fashion and social celebrities receive less attention in the daily press than they did forty years ago, new magazines and new newspapers have blossomed to specialize in these fields. More typically, the center of women's interests today is on health needs, education shortcomings, youthful crime, housing and the homeless, discrimination of all sorts.

Steered by the perceptions of women reporters, the whole scope of news has altered. Kay Mills of the Los Angeles Times states in her book, A Place in the News, that women reporters, by their own evaluation of what is important, have brought about a redefinition of what constitutes news. No longer are money and power alone important. The questioning minds of women reporters have opened the whole range of human affairs, and especially the hurts and shortcomings of society, as today's important news.

Mary Ellen Leary
Political Writer

September 25, 1991
Piedmont, California

INTERVIEW HISTORY

Miss Marion Devlin was invited to be the sixth memoirist in the University of California, Source of Community Leaders oral history series in January 1991. Her distinguished forty-seven year career as women's news editor for the Vallejo, California newspapers, the Vallejo Evening Chronicle and the Vallejo Times Herald, had terminated when she went out on strike in 1978. She and her fellow workers then put in six years with the strike paper, the Vallejo Independent Press [V.I.P.], but publication of that paper ceased in 1984. Now some six years later, the strong feelings engendered by a highly visible strike in a close community having subsided, it was a good time for Marion Devlin to reflect on the changes in the community she had covered as reporter and editor, and the changes in her profession.

The City of Vallejo, despite its location at the geographic northern end of the Bay Area, is a place very different from the cities of the San Francisco Bay Area. Crossing San Pablo Bay, over the Carquinez Bridge into Solano County means entering a world that has infrequently been the locus of Regional Oral History memoirs; the maritime-oriented communities there have in many ways been independent of the more urban life of the San Francisco Bay Area. Newspaperwoman Marion Devlin's oral history juxtaposes the demographics of these two bay areas. In talking about her work and views as a woman in journalism in Vallejo, she is also talking about a smaller-town life in California, and what makes it tick.

The newspaper world Marion Devlin entered upon graduating with Berkeley's Class of 1931 offered few role models for young women. She was considering graduate work in journalism when a job was offered her by Luther Gibson, owner and publisher of the Vallejo papers. All Luther Gibson knew about Marion Devlin was that she had studied journalism and that she came from a good Vallejo family. He needed her to cover the traditional "women's beat" and she was very happy to have the job--it was the Depression. Newspaper work had been Miss Devlin's ambition since her high school years at Berkeley's Anna Head School. She was ready to begin her career, and pleased to be located back in the town where she spent her early childhood, and which had family roots back two generations.

How Marion Devlin mastered her job and turned women's page news into the stuff that won her, and the newspaper, trophy after trophy from the California Newspaper Publishers Association, are themes of the oral history interviews. The volume begins with the history of the Devlin family: father Judge Frank Devlin, in 1907 first president of the reformist Lincoln-Roosevelt League; and mother, schoolteacher and homemaker Agnes Erb Devlin. The other main characters as Marion Devlin tells her story are Luther Gibson, dynamic newspaper publisher, Vallejo promoter, and state senator from Solano County, and a cast of supportive and stalwart fellow newsmen. For drama, and sorrow, there is the sale of the newspapers in 1971 to the Donrey Media Group, and the strike in 1978 that resulted in the creation of the V.I.P..

Today, 1991, Marion Devlin, who started life in Vallejo, then lived in San Francisco, and then Berkeley, and then in her early working days commuted back and forth from Berkeley to Vallejo, is comfortably ensconced in her Vallejo home, with easy access to friends made over the years, and to the retirement and volunteer activities that she has chosen. Her mobility slowed by arthritis, she stays in touch with her world of friends, and family--children and grandchildren of her late sisters--by telephone. For the wider world, she reads her newspapers. Perhaps no longer the self-avowed "newspaper junkie" she was in her growing-up years, she also takes in the breaking news from favorite television commentators.

The first time I met Miss Devlin I was charmed by what a welcoming and open person she was, ready to be helpful in every way, a self-aware interviewee, supplying me with copies of newspapers, scrapbook photos, and a strong sense of her history. I sent some questions before that meeting, and before each of the four subsequent interviewing sessions, giving her a chance to think through points in the history and elaborate on her answers. In her careful editing of the transcript she was bemused by her tendency to see everything in a bright light, and rueful at what she called her Pollyanna-ish views.

It was an insight to have lunch with Marion Devlin at a favorite Vallejo harborside restaurant where her every interchange en route--we toured old Vallejo, past the family home--and in the restaurant revealed how Miss Devlin is still very much the familiar and respected news professional, and one of the boys, too. Easy going and confidential, and completely tuned in to her public.

The photographs included to illustrate Marion Devlin's oral history have the timeliness and interest of good newspaper black and white photography. At my request she created fuller captions. She also loaned for our use copies of some editions of newspapers that show better than a thousand words the way she wrote her columns, and also chronicle the events that led up to the strike. They are appended.

For our California Gubernatorial Era Oral History Series the Regional Oral History Office has interviewed a number of journalists or publicists who covered California political history. In addition we have completed full memoirs with Harry Lutgens, publisher of the San Rafael Independent; Gobind Behari Lal, science writer for the San Francisco Examiner; and most recently Scott Newhall, editor of the San Francisco Chronicle. It is a pleasure to add a woman in journalism to our list.

We acknowledge with thanks the Class of 1931 of the University of California for their endowment to the Regional Oral History Office establishing the University of California, Source of Community Leaders Oral History Series. Generous matching funding for the Marion Devlin oral history was also received from Gibson Publications, Vallejo, California.

The Regional Oral History Office was established to tape record autobiographical interviews with persons who have contributed significantly to recent California history. The office is headed by Willa K. Baum and is under the administrative supervision of the director of The Bancroft Library of the University of California, Berkeley.

Suzanne B. Riess, Senior Editor
Regional Oral History Office

October 1, 1991
Berkeley California

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

(Please write clearly. Use black ink.)

Your full name Marion Erb Devlin

Date of birth October 27, 1909 Birthplace Vallejo, CA

Father's full name Frank Raymond Devlin

Occupation Attorney Birthplace Windsor, Ontario, Canada

Mother's full name Agnes Erb Devlin

Occupation Teacher, Housewife Birthplace Moore's Flat, Nevada Co., CA

Your spouse None

Your children

Where did you grow up? Vallejo, San Francisco, Berkeley

Present community Vallejo

Education Graduated 1927 from Anna [illegible] School, received B.A. degree from U.C. Berkeley in 1931

Occupation(s) Retired after 50 years of newspaper work primarily with Vallejo Times-Herald, and six years with Vallejo Independent Press

Areas of expertise Women's page editor, columnist, feature writer; also part-time city editor

Other interests or activities Travel

Organizations in which you are active Soroptimist Club; Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum; Lilac Branch, Children's Hospital; Board member, Reports Unlimited, credit and collection documentation service.

I VALLEJO AND BERKELEY BACKGROUND

[Interview 1: February 6, 1991]##[1]

Frank R. Devlin, and Family Home

Riess: Where and when were you were born?

Devlin: I was born on October 27, 1909, which is my father's birthday. I was born at our family home over at 901 Georgia Street. The fact that it was my father's birthday--my mother had invited about eight or ten of his closest men friends for a birthday dinner, a stag dinner, a duck dinner downstairs.

Riess: And she was extremely pregnant.

Devlin: And she was expecting the baby, and of course, they were all born at home in those days. She had her nurse with her. But I arrived at 7:30 that evening, just as the duck dinner was underway.

Years later, I was helping my father clear out his desk and there was a story in the Vallejo newspaper the following morning. The only headline--I was on page one, a little story about an inch-and-a-half--the headline said "Poor Frank Devlin: A third girl was born last night," and went on that they knew he must have wanted a son, which made my father very irate. He said he'd always wanted a girl. I took that with a grain of salt.

I was born in the family home. I had two older sisters, one four years older, one six years older. I don't want to sound like a Pollyanna, but I think it was an exceptionally happy family life. I've heard of big sisters who never wanted their little sisters tagging along. My sisters and their friends always included me in things.

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[1]##This symbol indicates that a tape or a segment of a tape has begun or ended. For a guide to the tapes, see page following end of interviews.

My father's older sister and her family lived next door to us. My grandmother lived here in Vallejo, in her own home, with an older daughter. So there was a lot of family life. My mother's family had left Napa at that point, but my father's family was still quite a bit around here.

Riess: Did it feel like you were living in the country?

Devlin: No, it didn't. Although, when my father built the home--he built so it would be completely finished and furnished when he and my mother moved in in 1902--he said several of his friends said to him, "But Frank, why are you building out in the country?" Well, Georgia and Alameda Street, where it is, now is almost downtown. It's a lovely old home.

Then when we moved away in 1915, nobody wanted to rent that large a home. So my father, I think in a couple of years, when the first war was getting underway and there was a great need for apartments, had it made into six apartments.

Riess: It was that big? It's referred to in a newspaper article as the "honeymoon cottage." It is the same home, the first home?

Devlin: It was the only home. I didn't realize that it was called that. I suppose it was because it was built so that they could move right in. I never remember seeing that.

Riess: Once he had determined to marry Agnes, he was going to have a home built for her, and he built what they referred to as a "honeymoon cottage."

Devlin: Oh, I think that was in one of Millard Fraser's stories on the Devlin family, come to think of it.

No. It's a great big home. It's still standing. When it was converted to apartments, there were two large apartments on the main floor, three on the upper floor, and one on what we would call the basement floor. My oldest sister, who was teaching here when I came up, and I eventually moved into the biggest apartment. After she married I continued there until I bought this home.

We have since sold the property. We sold it to two men, one of whom died. Then it changed hands again about a year and a half ago. I don't know the new owners, but it looks well kept from the outside.

Riess: Sounds like your father was quite a determined man.

Devlin: He was. I think if anybody did that to me, and picked out the furniture and such without my help--. But knowing my mother, who was also a pretty positive person, I'm certain that she must have been consulted on it. She was not one to be downtrodden.

A Party for Franklin Delano Roosevelt

Devlin: One of the house's brightest moments was the night that Franklin Roosevelt had dinner there in 1914. He was assistant secretary of the navy, and he was out making an inspection tour of Mare Island.

My father was the first president of the [Vallejo] chamber of commerce, and he also had about the biggest home, and Vallejo had no hotel. So the dinner--of course, again all men--was held at our home. It was catered. There was a catering firm from Oakland that brought up nearly everything.

My mother wanted pictures taken of the guests at the party, and it was decided no, because there were too many of the business men who would feel that they should have been included. But she insisted on getting the photographer up there to photograph the table at least. I've got a picture of that, I think. [speaking as she looks for photograph] It was used two or three times in other stories. So Franklin Roosevelt was a guest there.

My father became one of Roosevelt's closest admirers. When Roosevelt ran for president, my father and Hiram Johnson bolted the Republican Party to support him.

Riess: Just for that term?

Devlin: Yes, for the first two terms. They were against the third term. [looking through papers] My father presided at the meeting in San Francisco when Hiram Johnson as the main speaker gave his support to Roosevelt.

[looking at photograph] Here was the dining room table, and Mother's crystal and linen. She did so want the photograph with the guests there. My father saw Roosevelt a time or two after, and was really impressed by him. But he was strongly against a third term for anyone.

Riess: Do you remember the evening?

Devlin: I think I remember this, but the reason I think I remember it is that I remember hearing my mother and my sisters talk about it,

and some newspaper that I have listed the menu. The thing that I have never forgotten is that the dessert was spun sugar battleships on a little sea of foam. And my sisters talked about those so much that I could practically taste them. We sat on the top step upstairs where we could look down and couldn't be seen. It was a big occasion.

Riess: Was your mother the hostess in that she welcomed the guests?

Devlin: No. It was strictly a stag party.

Mrs. Roosevelt accompanied him. She was, of course, not included, but the commandant's wife of Mare Island invited her and my mother for dinner over there. My mother did not go because she felt that in case the caterers wanted to know where anything was, she had better be on hand. She was available, but out of sight. Typical of the times.

Riess: She sounds a little bit like a navy wife herself.

Devlin: Yes. She and my father did do quite a bit of traveling, and later, when he was on the State Railroad Commission, now the Public Utilities Commission, she used to go with him to a lot of the big conferences and things. She was a fabulous person.

Mother, Agnes Erb Devlin

Riess: Was she brought up in this style?

Devlin: No. She was born in what is now a little ghost town called Moore's Flat, in Nevada County, where her father owned and superintended mines. He had come out looking for gold just after the Civil War. He and my grandmother lived up there, and then they lived in Dutch Flat, but Moore's Flat is where she was born. Then they had seven, well, originally eight children.

He was in hydraulic mining, and after that was banned it was time to move on. Particularly because the school situation was so appalling up there. Everybody went to the one grade school. They were looking for a place where there would be good educational advantages, and they picked Napa, which at that time, I think--I may be wrong, but I think Mills was there briefly for a while. Anyway, it was considered quite a seat of learning. So my mother and her sisters and brother went through school there. Then she went to--it was called San Jose Normal at the time. She took some special work at Stanford.

Agnes Erb Devlin (above) and Frank R. Devlin (right).

Dinner table setting for Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Delano Roosevelt, at the Frank R. Devlin home, 901 Georgia Street, Vallejo, April 16, 1914.

Riess: Did her career actually materialize? When was she superintendent of schools?

Devlin: She was never superintendent, she was deputy superintendent. No, she was teaching. After she got her degree, she went right back to Napa to teach. In fact, she taught two or three of her sisters, and her brother, who were close to her in age. Then she was named deputy superintendent, and to my knowledge held that position until she and my father were married.

My father studied law in Judge [Henry] Gesford's office in Napa. That's where they met. Then after he was established in practice--. He was the youngest district attorney of Solano. He was elected when he was twenty-six. And I believe, unless there has been somebody since, but for some years, to my knowledge, he was the youngest superior judge. I think he was thirty-two when he was elected to that.

Riess: Do you think she ever looked back longingly to that career?

Devlin: No. I think she was one of the happiest--I hate the word housewife, but she was completely happy with her children and her life. There was a lot of social life. Vallejo, of course, has always been considered a blue-collar town, but it has always had a lot of social activities, small social groups. She and my father belonged to--I've forgotten what it was called--the Jollytimes or something original.

Family and Social Life in Vallejo

Riess: I looked at the Mare Island Centennial Issue. In fact, it took me hours to really do it justice.

Devlin: I got that out. I was very proud of it.

Riess: Yes, we'll have to talk about that. I really enjoyed reading the section on the social clubs, including the Snowballs. Who were the Snowballs? Were your parents Snowballs?

Devlin: I wish I could tell you. It sounds familiar. I remember hearing it and they might easily have belonged, but you know, you don't pay much attention.

Riess: Well, of course, you don't. That's right.

Devlin: My father was so busy, and my mother kept very busy. In my entire lifetime I remember three Chinese cooks and one Irish housekeeper in San Francisco. Our last Chinese cook was with us thirty-four years. So she always had help in the kitchen, good help. She kept busy, you know, just keeping the house organized.

We did, I would say, a fair amount of entertaining, primarily because of my father. She enjoyed it. She loved bridge. In Berkeley she belonged to the same bridge club for, I think, twenty-four years. My sisters were wild to learn bridge, and they needed a fourth, so I was roped in. I learned bridge when I was twelve or thirteen, which was unusual.

Riess: A prodigy.

Devlin: [laughs] Oh, I was never that good, but it was wonderful because if the four of us had nothing to do we could always have a bridge game.

Riess: Was her connection to the church an important part of her life up here, or down there?

Devlin: I'd say a good part. In Berkeley we all were active in the Newman Club on campus. My mother was president of the Newman Mother's Club and enjoyed that. But no, I would say she wasn't top-heavy in that department. We went to mass every Sunday. That's something definite, 10:30 mass. We had to be assembled about ten minutes after ten, and all go up to Newman Chapel for mass.

My sisters went to the convent up here before we moved to San Francisco, and then we all went to St. Rose Academy in San Francisco.

Riess: St. Rose?

Devlin: Yes. Which is now, I understand, out of existence this year. Then, when we moved to Berkeley, my oldest sister went right into the University of California, and my middle sister and I went to Anna Head, and that's where I graduated.

My paternal grandmother was one of the heavy, heavy Catholics here in Vallejo. She belonged to the third order of St. Dominic and was buried in the brown robes, the monk's robes that they wore. And my father and mother were very good about seeing that we girls were faithful at going to mass and Catholic schools--until we moved to Berkeley and there was none close by.

I did have one year down at Holy Names, Lake Merritt. I hated it. It was a long streetcar ride coming and going. They

piled homework on us fit to kill. So I went to Anna Head from the eighth grade through high school and loved it. It was a wonderful school.

Navy League, and Mare Island

Riess: You talk about Vallejo, back then, being a blue-collar town. Would you still call it a blue-collar town?

Devlin: I would say pretty much. We do have, of course, a very prosperous class here whose outlet is Green Valley Country Club. That came into existence, I would guess, about forty years ago.

Riess: By "outlet," you mean what?

Devlin: Where they would give big parties. There used to be a much closer tie between the Mare Island officers and their wives and Vallejo. But since Mare Island has been reduced in size so much, there isn't nearly the rapport. Also, that was due in large measure to people like Senator [Luther] Gibson who entertained lavishly and generously. The moment a new commandant or a new engineering officer would come to Mare Island, he and his wife would be honored at a party. Then others would followed suit. There was a great social life here.

Riess: So it was really fostered?

Devlin: By Senator Gibson, and another group--.

Jumping from one thing to the other, another group that has been very active here is the Navy League. Because of the activity, we were designated Vallejo Council No. 1. We're the number one council of the Navy League.

Riess: What does that mean?

Devlin: Well, it's just a fancy title. But the Navy League, you know, is a civilian group that supports the Navy in many ways, financially. It's quite a prominent organization, headquartered in Washington. We have a good active chapter here. I'm a charter member of that. We had our annual dinner the week before last.

Senator Gibson and Dr. James J. Hogan, who was the Vallejo representative--. That's one thing that Vallejo has done for many years, have a liaison representative in Washington, D.C. At present we're without one, but Dr. James J. Hogan was our liaison

for many years. Then, after that, it would frequently be an officer who had retired from Mare Island who had good contacts in Washington. He and his family moved back there. They would usually maintain their home in Vallejo and would come back twice a year to report.

Riess: But in Washington they were sort of lobbying?

Devlin: Exactly. Yes.

Riess: On what kind of issues?

Devlin: To keep the program at Mare Island up, to get ships assigned to Mare Island for repairs, construction. That's why Mare Island boomed so, of course, during World War II--it would have anyway--but after World War II they were afraid there would be a big drop off. So they were actually lobbyists, paid lobbyists.

Riess: There are interesting issues, living in a town that depends for its economy on war.

Devlin: I know it. And there are some who think that if Mare Island did close--which God forbid--it would be to Vallejo's advantage, because that would be terrific industrial land over there. Just as Benicia thought that once the arsenal was closed that Benicia would fade from the scene. Benicia has never done better than it has in recent years. So that might be the case in Vallejo, but I'm not one of those believers.

Move to San Francisco, Sea Cliff, 1915-1920

Riess: You moved to San Francisco when you were how old?

Devlin: We moved away when I was five. Governor Johnson, who was my father's closest friend--they were very, very close--when he became governor he appointed my father to the State Railroad Commission. That's when we moved down to Sea Cliff. We lived there from 1915 to 1920, when my oldest sister was ready for college. Then my father, who was one of these ultra-protective fathers, didn't want her commuting, didn't want her living in Berkeley, you know, with a lot of wild-eyed college kids. And then besides, I think he and my mother were ready to move.

Our loveliest home ever was at Sea Cliff, four stories on Seacliff Avenue [No. 16]. It was just beautiful. But this was during World War I, and we'd see the camouflage ships going by,

going through the Golden Gate--we had a fourth floor view room--and my mother and father found that depressing, and they found the fog horns depressing. During that period, I think, each one lost about three family members. They decided that they wanted to move away, and so we moved to Berkeley so my sister would be there to enter college. We just loved Berkeley, everything about it.

Riess: That's interesting, that whole picture of the camouflaged ships. I've never had that from anyone else, that sense of World War I.

Devlin: Yes. I have a beautiful photograph here, unless I gave it to one of my nephews. It was taken from our property, and it looked right out at this camouflaged ship going right past. (We lived out beyond the Golden Gate.)

Another thing that was sad and stressed the war--didn't bother me much at that age, but my parents were affected--our back fence was the Presidio boundary line. We had a sentry marching past all the time. Sunday dinners and holiday dinners or anything of the sort, I can see my father taking out a plate of food for him and then taking out other things. It just brought home the war too closely. We didn't have any family members in it, but I can see that sentry, and I can see the camouflaged ships, and it was depressing to them.

Riess: I wonder where those ships were going.

Devlin: I don't know. I presume that they may have been going through the canal. It's funny, that question had never entered my mind.

Riess: Do you have memories of the Panama-Pacific Exposition?

Devlin: Yes, it was in full swing, of course. We moved down there in the early summer, or late spring, just as soon as schools closed up here. Oh, I can see that Tower of Jewels! It was the most beautiful thing. My mother took the three of us over there several times during the day. Then my father took us a few times at night to see the illumination.

I can remember the marvelous free scones they gave away at the General Foods exposition. I can remember picking up something at every place that had free pamphlets. I couldn't read, but we three kids took every thing free that was handed out. It was a beautiful exposition.

Riess: And you went there many times?

Devlin: I would say quite a few times.

Riess: From that World War I period there is often a family story of influenza.

Devlin: Yes, that was what caused two deaths in my mother's family, two sisters. One of her sisters taught in the San Francisco schools. After her father died, her mother and three single sisters--there were three of them--moved to San Francisco. Napa was just too full of memories. Besides, two of the aunts were teachers, and they taught down there, so I do remember the influenza epidemic.

And while we were living at Sea Cliff, my father lost an older sister and his mother, both of whom lived here in Vallejo. But that was not from influenza.

Riess: Well, that's a substantial number.

Devlin: Yes, it is. My maternal grandmother died in 1919. There were five deaths in just a couple of years. And I think the general depression, and my mother mentioned so often those fog horns--.

Getting back to the Exposition. My sister said something that I hadn't been conscious of at the time, of course, but we moved down in 1915, which wasn't too long after the earthquake and fire. Yet I don't remember seeing any earthquake damage. That city rebuilt itself so rapidly. Of course, Sea Cliff was so new it was mostly sand dunes. We had to lease a place for a few months, or maybe a year, No. 1 Nineteenth Avenue. That also had the Presidio Wall. We lived there until our Sea Cliff house was completed.

Riess: So you had the house built for you?

Devlin: Yes. My father and mother picked out all the interiors.

Riess: When your mother was doing that house, do you think she would have used Gumps, or a decorator? Do you have any sense of her putting that house together?

Devlin: I don't remember. I think I would have remembered if I had heard Gumps. In fact, as I recall, I think the contractor brought samples of wallpaper and wood paneling. I remember the living and the dining room were beautifully paneled. There was a breakfast room, kitchen, pantry. Then on what we would call the basement floor was a billiard room. None of us played billiards. On the bedroom floor, I guess there were one, two, three bedrooms and two baths. Then on the top floor there was the servant's quarters, and this great, big view room, which would be like a big family room today, big fireplace.

Riess: That was typical in Sea Cliff, to have a viewroom to ascend to?

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: Is that where the entertaining would be done?

Devlin: No, we entertained in the living room, which also looked out on the ocean. Frank Werner, the shoe man, lived on one side of us, and I think Werner Shoes is still on Geary in San Francisco.

Riess: Do you know the name of the architect?

Devlin: I think I could find it some place.

Move to Berkeley

Devlin: Before we moved to Berkeley, my parents shopped and shopped and couldn't find what they wanted, and finally bought the house in the last block of Ashby [No. 2945]. They said, "It will do for the time being. It isn't as nice as this one, but it will do for the time being." Well, we got in there and we loved it. It was not an elaborate home, but it was so comfortable.

Riess: That's Ashby where?

Devlin: Just below Claremont Avenue. I could go to bed at night in my bedroom on summer nights with the windows open and hear the Claremont Hotel dance music. It was that close.

Riess: Is that house still there?

Devlin: Yes. I don't go by it very often. I go down to the Claremont Country Club about once every month, or six weeks, to meet my oldest and closest friend for lunch. I used to go by Ashby.

When we sold it there were restrictions: it could not be sold as a boarding house or fraternity or sorority or anything like that. We sold it to this family who seemed very, very nice. They had three children about the age we were when we moved there. He was a retired teacher.

Apparently the restrictions were changed almost immediately, and he sold it to Armstrong Business College, and they used it for student living. I would go by--. One time I saw a car parked on the front lawn. I could see curtains across our double garage, which made me think that somebody was living back there, and cars

in the driveway. We had three very dear sisters who lived south of us in the house next door, and they told me the noise was just awful. I don't know if they've moved or not. It was sad, because it was a comfortable old house.

Cars and Drivers##

Devlin: I remember the garage in our Sea Cliff house. The driveway was rather steep, and when the car went into the garage you pressed a button and the turntable turned the car around so you were headed out.

Riess: No!

Devlin: Yes. I read about that in Metropolitan Home as something brand new, and we had that in 1915. And I think all the homes there did. The car would be turned around, and you would be headed out.

Riess: And the mechanism never broke down?

Devlin: Never broke down. Backing out the driveway would have been a little difficult, because it was steep. So, you turned around, and then you went out. Of course, it was a single car garage. Nobody had more than one car in those days.

Riess: Your mother did the driving?

Devlin: No. My father, as I said, was very authoritative. He decided that my mother was too nervous to learn to drive. He was the most nervous man in the world, and was a terrible driver, safe but terrible. Never comfortable in a car, although I think he had the fifth automobile in Vallejo. He bought it in 1912. I think I read in one of the papers that it was the fifth car in Vallejo.

My mother wanted to learn, and he said no, and she gave in. But when the war came along--World War I, of course--she took the Red Cross driving course. Didn't tell him. They learned to get down under the car and check the various things, learned how to change a tire. She would have made a marvelous driver. When she told him about it he said, "I don't like to ask this of you, but I'll worry, and I'll never stop worrying, unless you promise me you won't drive." And she never did.

Riess: Oh, dear.

Devlin: And yet, when my oldest sister went to college he bought her a car immediately. It was for her, and the other sister. He bought me my car, a brand-new, little Chevrolet with a rumble seat, and I could have a special paint job, and he paid one of the Chevrolet men to teach me to drive. I was so glad, because my father couldn't have taught anyone to drive. But his word was law, and my mother never protested.

Riess: You obviously know these stories and these decisions, and almost the dialogue. Do you feel like you were there when it was discussed, or would things happen elsewhere?

Devlin: No. My mother used to tell the story afterwards. She thought it was funny later on, but I didn't think it was funny. I would have approved more if she had said, "Well, I've got my license." In fact, I think I still have the license that the Red Cross gave her showing that she had the driving instruction. Nobody drove us to mass but my father.

Riess: How did your mother get around to see friends? Did she have a driver?

Devlin: No, I guess she went with friends, or called a cab. Of course in those days at Sea Cliff I remember--well, Berkeley too--the milk was delivered every day, and the butter. The vegetable wagon came to your home. I've heard that there was a fresh fish vendor. There was a very good market up on Clement Street where they delivered twice a day. And in Berkeley we had the wonderful Star Market, which still is in operation on Claremont Avenue.

There was such a close tie with your market. I can remember --this is something I guess has been done before, but I never had heard of it--we had patronized the store always, and the day my father died, it was a Saturday morning, somebody going into the store had told Mr. Pappas that Frank Devlin had died. About 11:00 this great big grocery order was delivered, a couple of roasts, vegetables, a bottle of wine, a bottle of sherry, a bottle of brandy, just a huge order of everything you might want.

I remember Lem telling Mother, and asking her what she had ordered. She came down and she said, "I didn't order that. That must be somebody else's order. I'll call and tell him." She called, and Mr. Pappas said, "No, I heard that Judge Devlin died. I wanted you to have things in the house so that you wouldn't have to worry about it."

Riess: How gracious.

Lum Chow, and His Life with the Devlins

Riess: What was the cook's name, Lem?

Devlin: Lum Chow. But when we hired him, and my father asked his name, he said "Lum," and it sounded like "Lem." So we always called him Lem, but his name was Lum Chow.

Riess: Did he have a family?

Devlin: Fascinating story. (I'm going to talk you deaf, dumb and blind!) He had worked for another Berkeley family, Mr. Kinney, a banker over on Oakvale for, I think, twenty-some years. Then he worked for us thirty-four, and earlier he had worked for somebody else. He had a wife he didn't see for sixty-four years, and a sixty-four-year-old son he never did see. He sent money out. He sent out clothes, my father's worn suits and clothes. He had another son in Hong Kong, and two grandsons in Hong Kong.

He kept talking of going back, but he wouldn't go as long as my mother was living. My father died in 1945. My mother died in 1960. After she died--she was up here with me for a year, she had a stroke and then died--my sisters and I wouldn't sell the Berkeley house until Lem decided what he wanted to do. What we wanted him to do was to come up and take the basement apartment under mine over at the old family home where he would have his own little kitchen, and he loved to garden, and he could take care of that and we could take care of him.

He came up and saw it. "Oh yes, he loved it," but he had that feeling that he had to get back to China and get his wife and son out of Red China, Canton, which the Reds had taken over. So in 1962, very reluctantly he went back. My sisters and their husbands and I were all at the plane to see him off. We were all in tears.

Riess: Because he's going off to who knows what.

Devlin: I know it. He went back to Hong Kong where he stayed with his grandsons, one of whom was married and had a family and whom I later met. Then it was around three or four thousand American dollars he paid to get his wife out of Canton. They would let her out, because at her age she was of no use to them, but the sixty-four-year-old son they wouldn't let go. So Lem never saw him.

Before Lem left Berkeley, his doctor, Dr. [Clark] Burnham, Jr., an old family doctor, was at the house one night. (Lem had

been struck by a car and had suffered an injury.) I remember Dr. Burnham said, "Oh, don't let him go back." He said, "You know, these old Chinese feel they have to return, and they never last more than a year or two because they are used to the good food here." (Lem's coffee was always half cream and everything had butter.)

Dr. Burnham said, "They go back there and they just can't get along." I remember my mother's sister [Mrs. Joseph Cunha] said to him, "Well, after sixty-four years, how will he know if it's his wife?" And Dr. Burnham said, "After sixty-four years would it matter much?" [laughter]

Dr. Burnham was right, Lem lived only a few years after he returned to China. Later my niece and her husband were out in Hong Kong and they saw Lem's wife. Barbie said she looked like a little piece of old Chinese porcelain. She was so tiny. And then when my sister and I were out there we visited the grandsons and the great-grandchildren. I still communicate and send a small family check to the great-granddaughter every Christmas. She now types a good letter, and she works for an insurance company out there.

But Lem was a remarkable person. He did everything. My mother had a Japanese gardener, not full-time, and she always had a nice black girl who came in and did the laundry and the ironing. Well, he immediately agitated her to get rid of both of them, and he took over all of the gardening. We had one of the loveliest gardens in Berkeley. He took over the ironing of my father's shirts and those things. Later, we did have an awfully nice black girl whom he liked. He liked Virginia. She came once a week to do mother's and my personal laundry. But he ran that house, and he never took a day off.

He would take Chinese New Year's off, in the afternoon. And at the breakfast table on Chinese New Year's morning there would be blooming bulbs that he had been tending in the basement to have them in bloom at the right time, and an azalea plant for my mother. I have some beautiful vases and things here that he gave to me after--well, he always had them for my sisters too, but after they were married and gone.

Then he would go to Oakland and he would bring back a little bottle of Chinese gin. It came in little brown jugs. He was against drinking, except on Chinese New Year's. Then he would pour a little drink for my mother and himself and me. It tasted hideous! We had to force it down. Oh, and lichee nuts and candied ginger. He was just a dear person.

I didn't worry about my mother being alone in the house after both my sisters were married and gone. I would go back always Wednesday nights and weekends, but in the mornings he would come up in the kitchen, let my mother's cat upstairs, and if he didn't hear the water running up in her bathroom, he would call up to be sure she was all right. He was just--they don't come like that. I'd give anything to have him back.

Riess: He had a community of Chinese friends?

Devlin: Very, very few. There were a few who worked at the Claremont Hotel, but he never saw them except to ride down to Oakland. Oh, he would go down to Oakland I would say five nights out of the seven after dinner.

He was a great gambler. We learned that from his former boss. Mrs. Kinney said her husband would frequently give Lem twenty dollars to go down and gamble for him. She said he always brought back money. He never told us he gambled, and we never let on we knew.

Riess: Did you ever stake him?

Devlin: No. My father was against gambling, for one thing, I guess the district attorney in him. He [Lem] was, evidently, quite a gambler.

Riess: Were the gambling places in Emeryville?

Devlin: I know they have some there. He went to Oakland. I've heard that there is lots of Chinese gambling there.

One sad memory of Lem. In 1939 my oldest sister was getting married, in November. That was when the Japanese had really gone into old China, and Canton, which was his home. He took a Chinese newspaper, which he read from cover to cover--he couldn't read English--and he became so agitated over the war that he literally had a nervous breakdown.

There was a little, separate house at the rear of our property that the former owner had built, as he had a son interested in radio in the very early days. And this little house was a copy of the big house, with just one little room, and it had electricity. Lem slept out there in the summertime, and then moved into the basement in the winter. One night, when he was supposedly sleeping in his little house, my sister heard these screams coming from his house. Of course, my father went out.

Lem said that the Japanese were spraying poison gas in his room. He was terribly agitated. Dad had him come in. We all went downstairs. He was crying. My mother said, "Well, sleep in basement." "No. They'll spray poison gas there." So they finally settled him down on the living room sofa. He spent the night there, but several times during the night we could hear him crying. The next day he was terribly agitated. He said poison gas was coming through the furnace vents.

Dad had an old friend in the police department in Berkeley, and he asked him what to do, and he said we better get him to Highland Hospital. It broke our hearts because he just fought like crazy. An ambulance did come, and he cried and cried. He thought we were sending him away for good. They took him down to Highland. Then there was a hearing, and my father, mother and I went down. Oh, he was so grateful to see us, but they said he should go to Napa for observation. It was a nervous breakdown. So he went up to Napa.

The doctor up there I knew through a mutual friend, and he told me that actually Lem was mentally able to come back at the end of two weeks, he snapped out of this, but according to law they had to keep him for three months. I used to go up there every Wednesday afternoon to see him, visitor's day.

I'm talking too much!

Riess: Oh, it's a gripping tale. I know it will end.

Devlin: It's got to. [laughter]

One funny angle about that. I asked him what I could take him, and he loved chocolate bars, so I used to go to my regular grocery store and I'd buy a dozen chocolate bars, and I could see the man thinking, "You wonder why you're fat. Why do you do this?" So then the next week I went to another store, and I did the same thing. Just like an alcoholic, I was hitting every store. I would get six at one place and a dozen at the other. And Lem loved them.

He made friends also with them up there. They were very good to him. I thought they would put him in the kitchen, but they didn't, they put him in the garden, which he just loved. The fact that he knew that he was--I told him that I was taking him home. I can remember a lot of my mother's friends, and my aunt, all their tales of Chinese who had hacked the family to death with hatchets. They told my mother how foolish she was to take him back. Well, he never had a recurrence. He came home. He was

back for my sister's wedding. But, it was the only sad memory I have of Lem. He was just a dear person.

And I could never say enough good things for Napa. I was afraid that this rather ignorant, old Chinese would be, not treated badly, but could never make himself happy there. Maybe the fact that a family member went up to see him every week helped.

Riess: I'm sure that was very important.

Devlin: But he loved the gardening. He said people were nice to him. I was so grateful.

Stories of Hiram Johnson, and of FDR

Riess: Let's just go back across the bay to San Francisco. When your father and Hiram Johnson were very best friends, did that mean that you saw a lot of Hiram Johnson around the house? And do you remember him?

Devlin: No. I remember him, but no, it was not that kind of friendship. It was more, I guess, professional and business. Although I remember when I was fairly small my father had taken us to lunch, and the big treat was the Palace Palm Court, and Hiram Johnson came over to the table to visit with us. It was the first time I remember meeting him.

After he walked away, I said to my father, "I thought he was going to be a great big man." And my father said, "He <u>is</u> a big man." But I was surprised to find how short he was.

Then when the big Progressive movement began, and the Lincoln Roosevelt League was formed, my father was the first state president, and Hiram was the first vice-president. Their thinking politically was almost identical. Then again I remember, of course, the night of the big rally for Franklin Roosevelt. We were all up on the stage with the families.

Riess: When was that?

Devlin: I can't remember. It was the beginning of the Roosevelt campaign. Roosevelt was inaugurated in '32, I believe. Am I right? I think it was. But it was at the beginning of the campaign. I'm trying to think who ran against him. [Herbert Hoover]

Riess: You would have still been a student?

Devlin: I was probably--let's see, '32. I graduated from college in '31. I remember my oldest sister, who was unmarried then, and my mother and I were on the stage. Johnson gave the main address, but Dad gave the opening and presided at the meeting. The two of them were such ardent supporters of Roosevelt.

Riess: Do you think it derived from that personal contact, the dinner? That was the turning point?

Devlin: Well, I don't know, I guess so. Then I remember Roosevelt was out for the Democratic Convention in San Francisco, I don't know what year [1920], but I remember hearing my father tell this story:

Roosevelt was staying at the Palace Hotel, and my father's office was in the Hobart Building on Market Street, just a short way up. Dad read that Roosevelt was there. So he called him from his office and said he knew how busy he was, he just wanted to say hello and welcome to San Francisco. (This was in the early morning, my father had just gotten in the office.)

Roosevelt said, "Well, what are you doing?" Dad said he had just come into the office. Roosevelt said, "Come on down and have breakfast with me." Dad said, "No, I wouldn't think of it." He said, "I've had my breakfast. I've had it at home."

"Well, come on down and visit with me while I have mine." He was very insistent. So Dad went down, and he said Roosevelt came to the door in his undershirt and trousers. He was shaving, and Dad said--this, of course, I guess was before he had the polio--Dad said he had just about the handsomest physique you can imagine on any young man, and that he was just bursting with good humor, and that big Roosevelt smile. Insisted that Dad come in and visit with him while he finished shaving and had breakfast.

He just sold himself whereever he went. Philosophically, I think it was very much that Hiram Johnson and my father did not like whoever was running against him. I wonder if that was Hoover? But they also felt that government needed a new deal, and that Roosevelt was the one to provide it.

Riess: Those words were already in the air, "new deal"?

Devlin: I don't know. I just finished reading this book California Gold which plays up the Lincoln-Roosevelt League, and the overturn of the graft, and Abe Ruef and San Francisco. Of course, Johnson was the prosecutor against Abe Ruef. I think that the two men were young enough to feel that things had to be cleaned up in

Washington, as well as in San Francisco. Roosevelt certainly did a lot of marvelous things too during his terms.

I have a couple--no, I have more than that--wonderful letters that Hiram Johnson wrote my father from Washington. They kept up a pretty steady correspondence when he commented on various things back there. The two men just were such good friends. Both Johnson and my father died in 1945, Johnson before the war ended, and my father just after the war ended.

Parents' Interests: Clubs, Travels

Riess: Whom did your father surround himself with when you were in San Francisco? Was it a very political life?

Devlin: No. It really wasn't. [phone interruption]

My father was very, very much a family man. Any outside interests were taken care of during the day. He belonged to the Olympic Club, and had lunch there every day, and saw a lot of his cronies there. Took a swim usually every day. He belonged to the Commonwealth Club, the Union League, and the Olympic Club. But the Olympic Club was his favorite, and he did spend a lot of time there.

There was a group--I've forgotten, but they had a name for themselves. A motley group to me! It was Archbishop Hanna, Hiram Johnson when he was in town--. I've forgotten some of the others, primarily attorneys. My father enjoyed that bunch. But as far as having men friends at home, when he got home he wanted his family and that was it, unless he and my mother were entertaining jointly.

Riess: Did he have Jewish friends?

Devlin: Yes, and Paul Sinsheimer and my father were charter members, I believe, of the--what was the group? the Jewish-Catholic--? It was more than Jewish-Catholic, it was a group for tolerance. I should remember that. Let me look up in his obituary, because I think it is mentioned there. But I know Paul Sinsheimer was one of his close friends.

Jack Eshleman was a close friend. In fact, he was named to the Railroad Commission, I believe, to succeed Jack Eshleman when Jack became Lieutenant Governor. Mrs. Eshleman and the family

were close friends. But he was primarily a family man for the evenings and weekends.

Riess: And your mother, what did she belong to?

Devlin: She belonged to the Century Club in San Francisco. In Berkeley it was the Twentieth Century Club, or maybe I have them reversed, but she belonged to both of those groups. She would often attend lecture series, things of the sort. She was a voracious reader. She read everything.

She had taught school in the days when textbooks were hard to come by, and you memorized so many things. We memorized--. Good Lord, I remember driving down to Carmel and there was one bend in the road and she would always say something about, "Woodsy and wild and lonesome, it wandered away to the sea." And then she would try to get us to guess what that was from. I could recite Horatio at the Bridge and The Stag at Eve Has Drunk Its Fill. I could go on. Memorizing was a great game if you were taking automobile trips.

My father--after the bad things I've said about his driving, he's probably twirling in his grave--he had sense enough to know, I guess, that he wasn't a good driver, and for vacation trips he would hire a driver, who happened to be one of these Uncle So-and-sos. He was a close friend of my father's, and he was godfather of one of my sisters--Uncle Gorham [Nevins]. He was a wonderful driver, and one summer Dad and Mother, with Uncle Gorham at the wheel, took us down to visit nearly all of the California missions, the Mission Trail. Then, again, he would drive us up to Tahoe for two weeks, up to the Tahoe Tavern. Then as we got older we spent--particularly for my sisters--we spent quite a bit of time at Coronado, where my father had three lovely cousins living. They had built three adjoining homes, kind of like a little compound.

Riess: You mean San Diego?

Devlin: On Coronado Island. That was as my sisters got older. We went down there two years when the midshipmen cruise was there. My sisters were dating midshipmen.

Riess: You certainly knew California.

Devlin: Yes. He wanted us to see California before we did any traveling.

Then, when I was in high school, and my two sisters were in college, he and my mother decided it was time for us to see Europe. He wouldn't go. He had been around the world twice when

he was in the navy. I don't know if I mentioned that, but when he graduated from high school here in 1884, as he said, college was beyond the realm of possibility financially. He signed up in the navy as what they call the ship's writer, I guess it would be. He made two trips around the world, and studied law nights while he was aboard ship.

Riess: You mean he took texts with him?

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: And he knew what to take?

Devlin: I don't know. I guess somebody advised him. And then when he came back he went into Judge Gesford's offices in Napa and studied law.

But he said he would send us to Europe, but he didn't want to go. So my mother and the three of us went over and <u>did</u> Europe, as you did in those days, because you didn't fly, you know. We were gone actually from May to October, but that included a visit at Annapolis for June Week on the way.

Riess: So you went by train.

Devlin: Yes, to Washington. In Washington this same Dr. Hogan I mentioned got a private introduction for us with Calvin Coolidge, and we had luncheon aboard the presidential yacht. Admiral Boone was the presidential physician, and he was a friend of Dr. Hogan's, so we did that. So we <u>did</u> Washington, and <u>did</u> Annapolis, where we visited with my father's goddaughter and her husband.

Then we sailed for Europe and toured Europe. The one disappointment was my father insisted we include Ireland, which meant a lot to my mother in particular, but they were having such labor troubles that we were advised not to go. Again, we had letters from Hiram Johnson to this one and that one, and from the Secretary of State. We toured Europe and Scotland and France and Belgium and Italy.

That trip was when we really played bridge!

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Devlin: We played night after night, because we weren't brave enough to go out much in the evening.

Of course, the whole tour was arranged, so we had guides. We had a car and driver to take us through the chateau country and

down into Italy. I think he was death warmed over. He would always fill up on red wine at lunchtime and then drive like a bat out of hell when he got behind the wheel, but we survived.

To finish the trip, when we got back to New York my father was waiting for us, and he had tickets for the best shows. I remember The Girl Friend, and I've forgotten what the other big one was. Then we came home Canadian Pacific via Lake Louise and Banff. It was a fabulous trip. I had later trips to Europe, but none ever was as full of memories as that one. It was just great.

Riess: Did you have a beau at that point too?

Devlin: No, I did not, although at Annapolis my sisters roped in a poor midshipman for me. He was darling. He was very slow. I'm sure he had no date of his own. So I went to the Academy graduation and the Hop, but I didn't enjoy it much.

At Anna Head we didn't do much socializing with boys. We did have one or two dances a year. I did know a family friend's son that I would usually rope in. (The girls asked the boys for that.) But no, I was a late bloomer. [chuckles] I think I'm waiting for the bloom to come.

II THE YOUNG NEWSWOMAN

Anna Head School

Riess: Why was it automatically the University of California for you, rather than Stanford or Mills?

Devlin: My father thought UC was marvelous. He felt that the girls' schools were great for us, but he just thought UC was tremendous. He would have given anything to have gone there.

He didn't push us into it. We knew he loved it, and once we moved to Berkeley, and Ruth had decided she wanted to go there, he was so pleased that I don't think it would have entered our heads to have gone anyplace else. I just thought it was marvelous. I loved every minute of it.

Riess: Before we get to UC, would you talk about Anna Head first?

Devlin: Oh, that school, fantastic. I loved that.

Our class was considered enormous because there were sixty of us. I was editor of the yearbook. We were there after the glory days of Helen Wills and Helen Jacobs. They had a plaque in the entrance hall where the name of the most outstanding member of each class was. Helen Wills' name, of course, was there and Helen Jacobs', and mine was there for the class of '27. And was I pleased!

I just thoroughly enjoyed Anna Head. Several of my closest friends from there--the very few who are still living--I still keep in touch with.

Riess: Would you describe it as a finishing school, or was it more than a finishing school?

Devlin: It was a very, very good educational institution, but Miss Wilson, the principal, was strong on the finishing touches. The boarders, believe me--. There weren't too many boarders, and occasionally

I'd stay on for luncheon with one or two of them, and you observed all the niceties.

We had chapel every morning. It was--I guess if it was anything it was Episcopal. Miss Wilson was quite an elegant-looking lady. We would finish chapel singing, "Holy, Holy, Holy." Then, she would reach behind her on a little table and pick up a box of kleenex and walk down row upon row, and if she saw any girl with lipstick on, she would hand her a tissue and stand by while she wiped it off. Imagine this! And this was in 1927. She was a remarkable person, really a handsome woman, striking-looking.

I learned more at Anna Head than--I was going to say almost more than I learned at college but--. The faculty there was so great. My two English teachers, Miss Edith Mereen, who has since died, and Mrs. Florence Hall, I don't know what happened to her, I think they were the two who really made me love English literature and love writing. I was very reluctant to take over the yearbook, except that Miss Hall was our faculty advisor. She talked me into it, and I was so glad I did.

Then, of course--to jump to the Daily Californian--you're just nothing the first two years. I was so confident, and praying that I would get to be a junior editor, but I wasn't. The competition was very keen, and I could see why I didn't get it. But even those two years of experience, I thought, made a lot of difference. I enjoyed it. Professor Raymond was my journalism professor. He was just an inspiration, Charles Raymond.

Riess: What happened to the graduates of Anna Head? Was the orientation to Eastern girls' schools, would you say?

Devlin: Not as much then. In fact, I can't think offhand of any--. One of my close friends, who died two years ago, her grandmother took her to Paris for a year. Then she came back and went into UC, so she was a class behind me and the others. I would say that most of my friends from Anna Head went to Berkeley, simply because we were close to the campus. To most of us, the thought of the Berkeley campus was the big, wide world.

I had started going to the Big Game when they built the stadium. My father became a stadium subscriber, so he had seats, you know. Of course, my two sisters were into football, and my father loved it--my mother wouldn't go--but I started going to the football games, I guess, when I was a freshman or sophomore in high school. Football, I love. Baseball, I don't know what they're doing in those silly suits, I can't follow it.

Elmwood Neighborhood

Riess: What else about Berkeley?

Devlin: Our family loved Berkeley. There was that wonderful little Elmwood shopping district. There was nearly everything there you needed. The Claremont Hotel was a lot of fun for social activities and parties. There were a lot of parties. There was an awful lot of entertaining.

I can remember my mother and father giving a lot of dinners. They belonged to a club called the Benedicts, a dancing club. Nearly always before the dances somebody would have a dinner at their home. I can remember my mother having the dinners there, and the table being so beautifully set. She loved pretty table things. She didn't care about furs or diamonds, although she liked good clothes, but she did love beautiful silver and things like that. I have cabinets of the most elegant linens that she bought every time we went to Europe.

I remember one night she and Dad were sitting in the living room where they were having cocktails with the guests, and she happened to look into the dining room and she saw my cat, who had gotten in, up on the table licking the butter balls. Horrors, horrors! So she had to go out and get Lem to corral the cat and change the butter balls. She said she didn't think anybody else was looking, she hoped.

And at other times she had the bridge club for luncheon. I have the great big rose Canton punch bowl over there that was hers. They were having lunch, and all of the sudden her gaze was caught by the punch bowl, and there was old Pekoe with his head over the edge. He had been napping in there and never bothered to get out. You know how they love to get in bowls and containers?

Riess: Yes!

You were town people. Did your parents socialize with people who were the professors?

Devlin: No. My sisters and I all had favorite professors, but I don't remember particularly--. We were all great admirers of Professor [Herbert E.] Bolton and his family.

Riess: Did your mother belong to Town and Gown?

Devlin: No, she didn't. She belonged to the--I'm sure it was the Twentieth Century in Berkeley, and the Century Club in the city.

Riess: I'm trying to think of some of the people who lived over in that Claremont neighborhood. For instance, the Nimitzes.

Devlin: Yes, but they came, of course, in the later years. They lived just about four or five blocks from us. Mother and Mrs. Nimitz used to meet frequently at the Newman Mother's Club. My father was blessed by our next door neighbors. Chester Rowell was one of them. Mother and Mrs. Rowell were very good friends, and the Rowell girls and my sisters.

Riess: This is the newspaper Rowell?

Devlin: The newspaper Rowell. Of course, he and my father were politically very close. On the other side, for a time, was Theodore Bell, who became a congressman. He was as ardent a Democrat as my father and Rowell were Republicans, but they were all very good friends. He was a charming, handsome man. I believe he ran against Hiram Johnson at one time. Anyway, the Rowells were on one side, the Bells on the other. Bell and his wife were both former Napans, so my mother had known them long before they moved there. I can't think offhand of any faculty friends.

My father's friends would have been far more political. He commuted on the Claremont train to San Francisco, and there was a group there that they called the "supreme court" who always sat together and read their newspapers together. There was Fred Athearn, whose law firm my father later joined. Fred Athearn, Hubert Prost, who was an attorney. Gosh, who were some of the others? Milton Farmer, I think he was a judge. Judge Chandler, Bert Chandler. My father then joined the law firm of Athearn, Chandler, Farmer, and Frank R. Devlin. His name was used in full because there was another Devlin who was an attorney.

Cal Alums

Riess: When your sisters were in college, were they living at home?

Devlin: Yes. They joined a sorority and weren't too happy in it. They didn't want to live there. They liked living at home. When I entered college my father said, "You can join a sorority if you want." But he didn't approve of them, he thought they were kind

of snobby. He said, "I would like it if you would stay out a year and try to decide."

Well, I stayed out and all of my closest friends joined sororities. They would have me up there for lunch and to the house, and I felt like an outsider. At the end of the year I said I really wanted to join. He said, "Fine, go ahead." He was a very indulgent man, very firm, very lavish with gifts and love.

So I became an Alpha Chi Omega, and never regretted it for a moment. Four of the members of the sorority who were in or near my class, we get together two or three times a year. I loved my college years. I just loved it. [pauses] I've never heard myself before, but I'm ashamed, I sound so goody-good!

Riess: I think there is nothing better than to be a Cal grad in California.

Devlin: There are so many Cal alums up here.

A funny thing happened. Somebody came up [to the Vallejo area] selling life memberships in the UC Alumni Association. I was in Vallejo's nicest cocktail lounge with some of the newspapermen, and he came in that day. It was a fifty dollar deal, and you're paid for life. Several of them said, "Gee, that sounds good." The bartender had a son going there. He said, "I'll buy one for him." Handed over the fifty in cash.

The men pulled out their fifty in cash, but I didn't have fifty in cash. I said, "Well, I'd like to join. Will you take a check?" "Oh, yes. That's all right." So, he took my check. And, of course, he was a complete phony, he had nothing to do with the University. Pocketed all that money. Those who had paid cash were just out of luck. My check was made out and it came through cashed. I have the cancelled check. I sent it down to the University and they gave me a life membership. [laughter]

Riess: A super con artist.

Devlin: And when you think that he must have done that in community after community! Vallejo has a big, big Cal Alumni group. We don't have as many Stanford alums, but we do have a lot of Cal people.

There was one wonderful year when we had the Cal crew races up there on the Mare Island Channel. Boy, there was a turnout! Loads of them.

Riess: I think we are almost ready, in this story, for you to enter Cal. What were the conditions for entrance to Cal?

Devlin: I think if you had a "C" average they would welcome you with open arms. And I will say that the Anna Head education prepared you for California, Stanford, or any place. I've heard it from so many of my friends. You think you are going to be overwhelmed by the classes at UC. Somehow, you can hold your own in them. It was really just a breeze going from Anna Head to California. I never had any problem with grades.

Newspaper "Junkies"

Riess: When you entered, did you know what your course of study would be?

Devlin: I knew I was going to major in English. I wanted to major in journalism, but there was no real journalism major.

Riess: You really knew this? Why was that? Did your father have a lot of respect for newspapers?

Devlin: Yes, he did.

Riess: Was there a lot of newspaper reading in the house?

Devlin: Oh, our house was full of newspapers. We took the Chronicle and Examiner. He brought the Evening News home with him to read on the train. Sometimes he would bring that and the Call Bulletin. We took the Berkeley Gazette, the Oakland Tribune, I believe, and the Vallejo papers were continued.

Riess: That's amazing!

Devlin: We were a newspaper family. At breakfast, Dad would read one paper hastily, and then leave it for Mother and take the other one to read on the train. Whichever one she didn't care for, he would read on the train. Then at night, as I say, he would bring home the News.

Riess: It almost sounds like an addiction. Do you think this was his political finger to the wind, always to be reading the newspapers?

Devlin: He just enjoyed them. I don't remember him reading many books. He read an awful lot of periodicals, good ones, political ones. My mother was a voracious reader. She read everything.

I think my father was retired when I came up here in '31. He bought one of the first radios, just as he had to have one of the first cars. Our nextdoor neighbor at that point was a specialist in radios, Arthur Halloran. He was a very good friend of Dad's. We heard our first radio at his home. Then Dad said he would love to have one. So he got an Atwater-Kent, installed it for us. I remember somebody had to remember to put water in the battery. We had that in my father's den. He loved hearing the news and hearing the prize fights. That amazed me. I didn't know he had that in him, but he did.

Riess: So, it was the sheer news value of news.

Devlin: I'm a news junkie myself. When the [Persian Gulf] war started, I just wrecked myself. I listened to it until two and three in the morning. I had it on all night long for the first couple of nights. Now, I don't turn my light out until I've heard Charles Kuralt and Leslie Stahl at midnight. Then, I usually turn the light off at 12:30.

Riess: Did he read the news critically?

Devlin: I don't remember. You know, you wish you would have paid so much more attention to things.

I said we took the Oakland Tribune. I don't know if we did. He had known Knowland, Sr., old J. R. Knowland. I think they were in the Assembly at the same time. My father was in the Assembly for four years. But the Berkeley Gazette my mother read every word of. She loved that.

I remember we all loved O. O. McIntyre. All of us had to read his column. He wrote a column on the editorial page of, I think, the Examiner. It might have been the Chronicle. It was a morning paper. He wrote a great column, Herb Caen-ish without the barbs, light, entertaining.

Frank Devlin, and Family Financial Situation

Devlin: As I say, my father had an awful lot on his mind. He did an awful lot of favors for people. Jack Eshleman's widow was left without very much money. He died so unexpectedly, and she had four children. My father helped her get established in the insurance business. All of our insurance was transferred to her. He got a lot of his friends to do the same. I remember two navy widows who

had great difficulty getting their husband's pensions, which were deserved. He went to bat for them.

He was always active in the fight to build up and keep Mare Island. There were many years when Mare Island was threatened with closure. The lower Bay interests were out to build up Hunter's Point, and discontinue Mare Island. He made two or three trips back to Washington with Vallejo and Mare Island contingents to urge that Mare Island be maintained and expanded. It's a godsend that they did, because in World War II I don't know what they would have done without this for the Pacific fleet.

Riess: How did he build up his fortune? Was it in his first practice up here?

Devlin: Well, it was just a good law practice.

Riess: It sounds like there was no end of money.

Devlin: We lived very comfortably, and I will say that my sisters and I wondered in later years how we were always able to have good help. Although it will shock you when I tell you that this fabulous old Chinese lived with us all those years for the enormous pay of one hundred dollars a month. Board and room, one hundred a month.

Riess: And it never changed?

Devlin: I finally persuaded my mother. She thought it was ridiculous. "Why," she said, "all my friends say that's more than they ever paid." But I persuaded her that he needed twenty-five a month more. Help was cheap, but we always had lovely homes, and as I say, we had three cars. There was his car, the one for my two sisters, and then I got my car when I went into college.

His law practice was very good. He went in alone, at first, in San Francisco, and then took in a young law partner. Dad eventually broke the law partnership and went back to practicing alone. But, he did have a very good practice. His practice was corporate law. He had good clients. I wish I had paid more attention.

I have two scrapbooks here. He had one secretary--this was while he was district attorney and there was a very famous murder case up here--and she kept the most complete scrapbook I've ever seen on what he was doing. Before we left Vallejo he had a very good law practice. Well, he was Superior Judge then--I don't know what that paid--and he retired and went into private practice. Had his offices up in Fairfield, the county seat.

Nothing was inherited. Not only that, but he built the home next door to us in Vallejo so his sister could take in roomers and have an income, because she was a widow with two children. He helped his mother. Bought a little piece of property--which is now in our redevelopment program--so that she would have an income. He was the youngest in the family and he helped his oldest brother go through Ann Arbor and become a dentist--the one who assembled the Chinese furniture. I guess people could do things.

Riess: That's quite remarkable.

Devlin: And nothing inherited.

[Interview 2: February 12, 1991]

Devlin: I was thinking over the finances question. Of course, his legal fees were very good, I'll say that. He also invested quite a bit in good real estate. At one time he owned or leased three service stations, two of them on Shattuck and Hearst on diagonal corners, one out on Solano Avenue. He owned business property in Oakland and over in the Mission.

At the time when you asked that, I thought, "Well, how did he do that?" It just kind of baffled me. Of course, he was getting income from those places. He made good investments in those. He did not play the stock market, and he was so grateful for that.

The service stations, the two on Hearst and Shattuck, one was taken over. The one on the southeast corner is now University property. They were both Shell stations. The other was a large service station area and maintenance. We sold that eventually.

He also owned the property up on Shattuck and Vine where Cocolat is now. It was a Lewis Store. When he bought it, it was a Lewis Store.

Riess: Now what is a Lewis Store?

Devlin: Well, Lewis Stores were very good. They were chain food stores. It was quite large. Then, when Lewis folded, part of it became a very good butcher shop and delicatessen. Actually, it became three stores.

Riess: Lenny's was the butcher, until it closed recently.

Devlin: Yes. That's the one. I had forgotten the name. The Goldbergs bought it from us. They had the delicatessen. So, my sisters and I sold that property. The taxes were getting out of all reason.

Riess: You were a major owner in the area now called "gourmet ghetto!"

Devlin: Yes. I guess that's right. [chuckles] I have friends who take me up there every now and then, and we do the stores and have lunch up there. I always have to go into Cocolat and see their fascinating things.

Then the service station down on Solano Avenue--. We sold all that property, because when my sisters got married and had children they wanted the money then. I was just as glad to get out too.

The Depression, Covering the Hunger Marchers

Devlin: Actually, we were hardly aware of the Depression. That goes for my family, and that goes for Vallejo. Vallejo survived because as a blue collar town the Mare Island jobs were still there. There wasn't much Depression. Aside from the fact that two of my sorority sisters had to quit college and get jobs because their fathers lost their jobs, I don't remember much curtailing in our comfortable living.

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Devlin: I wasn't really aware of the Depression, except that the staffs on the newspaper--. We published a morning paper and an evening paper, the evening paper five days a week, and the morning paper every day, and one subscription got you both. But the evening Chronicle staff consisted of the editor and myself. He did the wire copy, handled Mare Island, made up the dummies, and any important news. I had a phone beat: the undertakers, the fire department, the police department; did feature stories and read all the proofs. But he would also send me out on stories.

One morning, when I was fairly new here, he told me to go out to some place on the highway and get a story on the Hunger Marchers. Well, I'd read about the Hunger Marchers, but I didn't think that there were any around here. So I went out feeling that I looked pretty natty in my left-over-from-college knit suit, my shiny, little, new Chevrolet with the rumble seat.

I went out and parked, and this highway patrolman came down and gave me kind of a dirty glare and he said, "What are you doing here?" I started to answer, and he said, "You were supposed to have gone on ahead with the women and children last night." I

pulled my portly self up and said, "Do I look like a hunger marcher? I'm from the Vallejo Times-Herald and News-Chronicle." The poor man was so embarrassed. He thought that I was a Hunger Marcher left over from the female contingent.

Seeing these people, marching to Sacramento, that is the first time I really became aware of the Depression. That had to be in '31 or '32, because I know I was very new on the paper. Aside from that, the Depression didn't hit close to home, and it didn't hit close to Vallejo.

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Journalism Studies at Berkeley

Riess: How did you know you wanted to be a newswoman? Were there any newspaper people in your life? Did you know any women journalists?

Devlin: No, actually I didn't. Thinking back, I think a lot of it was because I liked to write and I would get "A's" in composition and things of the sort. The grown-ups in the family would always say, "Oh, you must learn to write when you grow up." Then, when I went to Anna Head I was named editor of the yearbook. "Oh, well then, you must go into journalism." You can imagine what a basic foundation that was, the yearbook for Anna Head school. [chuckles]

Then, when I went to college I did get accepted as a freshman reporter for the Daily Californian. That really got me interested.

Riess: Last interview you began to tell me about Professor [Charles H.] Raymond's classes. I would like to hear more about them. They seem far from journalism, but maybe not.

Devlin: They were, and yet the man was positively inspirational to me, as far as getting me to read good books. I can remember authors I had never heard of. There was one in particular that he mentioned that I had never heard of, and I went home and asked my mother, and to my amazement she hadn't either. But, because he had said I should read them, I did.

He introduced me to so much really unusual and good reading. But that final examination deal, you'd tell people about that--we would get the topic, and then I could go home and do the story at home if I wanted, consulting any dictionary for proper spelling

and such! He made it so easy and wonderful, but as far as training for journalism, it just wasn't.

Riess: Was he critical of your writing?

Devlin: No. He was very--. His remarks--. We didn't get grades, as I recall. He would write what he liked and what he didn't like. He was always extremely kind in referring to them. I don't know if he was with everybody. I didn't have any particular friends in his class, as I recall, where I could compare my feelings with theirs. I just thought he was terrific.

Riess: Well, the two classes--I guess I told you last time I had looked them up--one of them was called "Writing Based on Journalistic Masterpieces," and that was the one that you're probably remembering, with Defoe, Addison, Steele, Kipling and others.

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: Then the second one, "Advanced Composition Based on Masterpieces of Literature. Inquiry into the problems and ethics of journalism." Do you remember the "problems and ethics" issues?

Devlin: If there were, I don't remember them. [laughter]

Riess: Then there was a fellow named King Wilkin. What did he do?

Devlin: I knew King Wilkin, I believe, later on. I don't remember him on campus. Was he teaching there?

Riess: Lecturer in Journalistic Studies, at that time. I don't see any classes that he was giving, but he's listed in the catalogue as a lecturer.

Devlin: I may be wrong, I thought he later was the PR man down at DelMonte. Now, I could be totally wrong. I can even see him, but I don't connect him with the campus in any way.

I'm trying to figure, too, where the twelve units of journalism came from which has always been in my memory very firmly. Yet, with only those two courses--. I'm sure they weren't giving six units apiece.

Riess: Were there any journalism classes given through another department? I noticed that Raymond died in 1939, and briefly the teaching of journalism was taken over by Eric Bellquist in political science.

Devlin: No. I don't recall any other.

I just wonder if this could be it. (It's all so long ago.) I know you majored in English, but you could call yourself a journalism major if you took Professor Raymond's courses and worked on the Daily Californian. Do you suppose they gave any units for that? That could have made up the twelve units, because I worked for it in my freshman and sophomore years. Maybe that allowed six units, and then six from Professor Raymond. I don't know, but that just is the only thing I can think of.

Riess: The Dill Pickle and the Raspberry Press, did you contribute to either of them?

Devlin: No. I remember them, but I had no inclination to work on either of them.

Riess: Quite a different thing?

Devlin: Oh, yes. They were pretty cruel things they would write about people that I knew. They were the worst kind of campus humor, very well patronized, I might add.

The San Francisco Papers

Riess: But back to influences, there were no newsmen who came through your house?

Devlin: I mentioned Chester Rowell.

Riess: Chester Rowell, he was with the Fresno paper, wasn't he?

Devlin: He was one of the leaders in the Progressive movement also, with Hiram Johnson and my father. Am I wrong? I associate him, somehow, with the Call-Bulletin. I could be wrong.[2]

Riess: He must have been associated with a local paper when he was living locally.

Devlin: Yes. They lived next door to us for quite a few years. His children--he had two daughters and a son--were attending the

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[2]Chester H. Rowell, 1867-1948: editor of Fresno Republican, 1898-1920; editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, 1932-1935, and major editorial columnist, 1935-1947.

University. The son was about my age and the two older sisters were about the ages of my sisters.

Riess: So, any heart-to-heart talks with him about your career?

Devlin: Actually, the only newsman that I knew who really had me interested was another next-door neighbor. (Our next-door neighbors changed quite a bit. I hate to think it was due to us. [laughs]) I don't want to get into that now, because he's the one who got me my job here.

No. I really can't think. My father knew a lot of them, knew quite a few. Some place around here I have some columns by some San Francisco columnists who mentioned him in various ways. Of course, he was very close to the newspaper here in Vallejo. That was owned by a very, very close friend of his, long before Luther Gibson bought the papers, William D. Pennycook. But they were family friends, not mine.

Riess: What were his feelings about Hearst and the Hearst papers?

Devlin: Kind of ambivalent. Hearst had been a good supporter of the clean-up campaign in San Francisco, and the railroads, and had supported the Progressive movement in certain ways.

Riess: He did?

Devlin: Yes. Not all the way. I think my father disapproved, at first, in many ways, but he was grateful for the fact that he had supported the Progressive movement. The book that I just finished reading--I think I mentioned it, California Gold, by John Jakes--Hearst figures in that considerably, and the newspapers that did and didn't support the Progressive movement and Hiram Johnson. The Chronicle definitely did not.

One thing I remember about Professor Raymond's class. He said there were only two good newspapers in California in his estimation: the San Francisco News and the Sacramento Bee. Those were papers that we got at home. My father and C. K. McClatchy had been in the Assembly together, and McClatchy sent it to my father for free. And of course we always took the San Francisco News. I remember Raymond was very caustic about the San Francisco papers, except the News.

Riess: The News was a morning paper?

Devlin: Evening paper.

Riess: Were the papers the thick things that they are now?

Devlin: Well, there weren't all these flyers that are in them. No. They weren't that thick. In fact, I don't remember the Examiner and Chronicle being that much thicker than the Berkeley Gazette. There was good advertising, but not the pages of classified, and certainly not those inserts which are the money-makers these days.

Riess: And were the social sections something your mother would turn to?

Devlin: I think she and all of us turned to the social sections, not as much for the stories as for the advertising from the good stores. It was always a come-on. Oh, my mother loved Schonwasser and the White House.

Riess: Schonwasser? I don't know that store name at all.

Devlin: It hasn't been there for years, but it was a very, very fine store. It was right across from the White House, at Sutter and Grant Avenues. It was exclusively a ladies shop. I remember my mother said she got most of our layettes there, and at the White House. The good old-fashioned stores like O'Connor-Moffett's, and the Emporium--the advertising was pretty thick in the social pages.

There were interesting stories about the leaders of San Francisco society, not that they were friends of ours necessarily. But yes, from the time I started to read newspapers, it was an addiction. That went for all of my family. We all loved them.

Riess: Did the social pages also include feature articles?

Devlin: There were feature articles and interviews with celebrities passing through San Francisco. Pretty general coverage.

Riess: Do you think of any names of people that you would want to be sure you read? Any bylines? Were there bylines, in fact, in the San Francisco papers?

Devlin: No. I don't remember. I don't remember them well enough.

The Tobin family, of course, figured very prominently. Patricia Tobin and her younger sister, Nini, went to St. Rose, and Patricia and I were in the same class. We made our First Communions at the same time. She was always looked up to as "the" prominent member of our class at St. Rose.

Then several of the Murphy girls were in my sisters' classes. Their father was the fire chief of San Francisco. So their families appeared on the pages often enough that we enjoyed

finding them, enjoyed that touch of notoriety that "we knew them."

Riess: But I was wondering whether there were writers who you became aware of?

Devlin: No.

Riess: Were bylines less common then than they are now?

Devlin: They really were. It's laughable. In our present Vallejo Times-Herald there will be two or three bylines by the same person on page one. Well, that's something that when I was working there our managing editor would never permit. One byline, and then occasionally, if it was a very important story, the initials at the end of a story. If the story jumped that was better, but three bylines for the same person is kind of silly.

Riess: It gives you a sense that the paper is written by two or three people, which is not a good sense.

Devlin: Exactly. It's not.

No. I can't really recall any particular byline.

Riess: Who was the columnist, Annie-something--?

Devlin: Oh, it was Annie Laurie. Yes, now I remember, we all looked for her byline. I'm glad you mentioned that, because I would never have thought of it. Annie Laurie was quite well known.

Why do I think that Kathleen Norris wrote for a while? She wrote for the paper, didn't she? I read all of her novels. I loved her stories, but I thought she had also had written for the paper. She was a great favorite of my mother and my aunts and my sisters, and mine.

Riess: Did they know her?

Devlin: My mother and I heard her speak in San Francisco at some woman's club. She was just a charming person, but there was no personal friendship there.

UC, Daily Californian Staff

Riess: Did you get involved with debating? I interviewed Garff Wilson from the class of '31. He was a great debater.

Devlin: He was at our last reunion, and the one before. He was a big man on campus. We all knew him.

No. I was very shy about getting in front of the public. But my oldest sister was president of the debating society. She was terrific, and she should have been twice as shy as I was, I think, because she had gone all her life to a convent school, either in Vallejo or at St. Rose. But she loved debating. She belonged to Parliament, the debating society, and she tried to talk me into it.

I hated to even put up my hand to speak in class because I hadn't been to classes with men in them. She hadn't either. When I went to Berkeley I loved it, but I was not about to make myself conspicuous. I don't know why I had the nerve to go out and work for Daily Californian. I loved that. I made some good friends there. But no, I did not debate. Later, when I came up here, I had to do radio work and things of the sort, but not in Berkeley.

Riess: I have pages from the 1930 Blue and Gold showing some of the Daily Cal staff. I pulled them together thinking I might find a picture of you, but I didn't.

Devlin: I was never that important on the Daily Cal.

Riess: When you got a position with the Daily Cal in your freshman year, were you assigned to someone who took you through the ropes?

Devlin: I don't remember, but there must have been. I don't remember that. I remember, more or less, just being handed rewrites. I don't remember any exciting assignments. Freshmen and sophomores didn't get much.

I was so hoping I would get a junior appointment, but as I said, I did not. It narrowed down, I was told, to two of us. One of them was dating one of the senior editors. There was no chance for me, and I could understand. The two years I enjoyed immensely. That really gave me a feeling for knowing that I wanted to continue.

Riess: They had a big freshman and sophomore year staff and then they narrowed it down?

Devlin: Each year they narrowed it down. At the end of your freshmen year they whittled it down for the sophomore year, and so on, so that the junior and senior staffs were small and workable. I would have loved being on those, but as I say, I could understand the competition was terrific.

Riess: Did the paper have a lot of prestige? The "Monarch of the College Dailies," and all that?

Devlin: It really did. I thought it was an outstanding college paper. One thing that I did like was that I had an opportunity to go to the pressroom down on Allston Way, I believe, where the paper was printed. We would go down there the night that it was being run off the press and check the page proofs. It was the first time that I had ever really been exposed to that side of a newspaper. I loved it.

Riess: They sold advertising too? Did you?

Devlin: I didn't get involved in that. They did have an advertising staff. I was just on the editorial.

Riess: For fun would you flip through these pictures from Blue and Gold and tell me who you remember of these.

Devlin: Oh, Dan Norton very, very well. I remember him completely, and Kay [Katherine E.] Braun, yes, the women's editor.

Riess: Tell me if any of them went on to do anything in journalism. Dan Norton is the first one you mention.

Devlin: Yes. He was editor, and Kay Braun was women's editor. I don't know what happened to them after that. Bill Hudson I remember also. He was editor in the spring. Kay [Kathryn E.] Eshleman, I've known her for years. As I said, my father replaced her father on the State Railroad Commission. Lois Swabel, I remember her.

Now, Ann Meux, I remember her as being very helpful. She was a junior editor. I think, as I recall, she did kind of break me in and tell me what was expected. There is Ruth Waldo, of course. Silverman? I don't remember her. Dwight Bartholomew I do remember. I just remember them because they were prominent.

Riess: Tell me what you remember of Ruth Waldo.

Devlin: She was a very pleasant person, friendly, always busy. Had a lot going. She was an active person. I used to see her actually more at parties. Not in our neighborhood; she lived in Claremont Court, and as I said, we lived on the last block of Ashby. But there were a lot of parties, and I remember seeing Ruth there a lot, and of course seeing her on the campus. She was always really involved in something. She was one of the busiest women on the campus. A very likable person, very friendly.

These names sound familiar. Good Lord, that's a long time off, sixty years ago.

Riess: The men look so handsome in these pictures.

Devlin: They do. And you know something that I was just noticing? They all have such beautiful haircuts, neckties, white shirts, dark jackets. It makes a big difference. And the girls look so nice.

Fred Stripp, I remember him. Al Wahl and Kay Eshleman went together for some time. Oh, she married him, didn't she? Yes, Kay Eshleman Wahl. That's right. They live up at Dutch Flat, the last I heard. I didn't know anybody on the sports staff. That was--

Riess: A world unto itself?

Devlin: A world unto itself. Those do bring back memories. I have that Blue and Gold here. In fact, I have all the Blue and Golds for--my sister entered UC in 1920, and I finished in '31, and I have their Blue and Golds as well as mine.

Riess: When you were on the freshmen and sophomore staffs of the Daily Cal did you cover any events that you remember particularly? Or was it just mostly rewrites?

Devlin: Not a thing. It was mostly rewrites. I don't remember covering anything. If I did, it had to be something very unimportant.

Riess: Rewrite was in the traditional "who, what, when, where, why" style?

Devlin: Yes. I can remember one thing I did, and I don't know why I ever did it. I was typing a story one day, and instead of spacing between each word I gave a double space between each word. Made much prettier looking copy. I think it was Ann Meux came by and said, "Marion, why are you doing that?" I said, "Well, it looks better. It makes neater copies." She said, "Don't do it." I don't know what possessed me. That has haunted me all of these years. [laughter]

Riess: Oh, dear. Your one shot at restyling the newspaper!

Devlin: Weird.

Riess: Did they do any of the composing there?

Devlin: No. The composing room was on Allston Way in those days. The big shots on the paper went down there and supervised the composing and the general make up, and they made up the dummies.

Riess: So there you were, somewhat launched in the newspaper world. but somewhat thwarted by not being a junior or senior editor.

Devlin: Very, very disappointed.

III LUTHER GIBSON'S VALLEJO TIMES-HERALD

An Introduction

Riess: Tell me about your first job? Did you have the job in Vallejo lined up when you graduated?

Devlin: Yes. It had been promised to me.

This brings in another nextdoor neighbor. There was a charming navy captain who retired from Mare Island, and bought the home next door to us because they were very close friends of my family.

Riess: This is on Ashby?

Devlin: Yes. He was a frustrated newspaper man. He had always wanted to own a newspaper, and he had plenty of money. He was a charming gentleman from Louisville, Kentucky. Luther Gibson, who was just more or less starting up here, let Captain Cox--or Uncle Leonard, as I always knew him--buy into the paper. He became publisher of the evening Chronicle, and Luther Gibson, publisher of the morning paper, and the two were jointly owned.

Captain Cox always took great interest in anything I wrote. He and I used to exchange birthday poems and Christmas poems. I have some of his and they're terrific. When I was a senior in college, he asked what I was going to do. At that point I was thinking some of going back to Columbia, which my father had suggested, but it was Depression times.

Captain Cox said, "Well, I'll guarantee you a job on my newspaper. You come up there, and you'll find a place where you can start your career. You can stay for as short a time or as long a time, whatever you want."

That sounded pretty good to me. None of my friends had jobs. I knew two people with jobs: one friend of mine, a young man who was going into the forestry service; another girl was going to

work at the White House [department store in San Francisco]. Three of my sorority sisters had to drop out of college because their fathers lost their jobs. I decided I would do pretty well if I came up.

Captain Cox said, "Of course it won't pay much; you'll probably start at $16 a week." Well, that sounded elegant. So he made an appointment for me with Luther Gibson. I came up quaking in my boots, because I had never met him. I had heard about him. I guess I made a good impression because--.

I learned from a friend--. This is a sidebar, but I have to throw it in: many years later, after Senator Gibson was so pleased with my work, the assistant publisher told me that when Captain Cox told Mr. Gibson that he wanted me on the paper he said, "Well, I'd rather not take her. If she's no good, it will be very embarrassing to fire Frank Devlin's daughter." But he took me.

Anyway, after the interview he said, "Would $18 a week be all right to start on?" And there was $2 more! I was overjoyed. So that's how I got my job. That's why I never had a resume. I began in May or June of '31 and just stayed on.

Riess: Well, that's very fortunate.

Devlin: It was a wonderful break.

Riess: What was Captain Cox's interest in having a paper? Did he want a power base for something?

Devlin: No. He had always wanted to write. He wrote the editorials in the Evening News-Chronicle. His editorials were, I swear, literary gems. He wrote like a professional. His degree was civil engineering, and he had been in the navy for many years.

He and his family had, as I say, loads of money. Just charming people. He had always wanted to own a newspaper, and when he found out that Luther Gibson might accept financial support, he thought, well, this was a good chance. He did this before he retired from Mare Island--he retired as the engineering officer there. Then they bought the home next door to us, from Theodore Bell, who had been a congressman from Napa originally.

Riess: You had a concentration of Solano County people down in Berkeley. I wonder why.

Devlin: I think the Coxes came down simply because they had been down to our home quite a bit. They knew we were wild about Berkeley. We loved the weather. We loved everything about Berkeley.

Riess: Did you become close to her?

Devlin: Quite close. They lived just about a block and a half from here, two blocks. She and I went to many of the same parties. She was a darling, a beautiful little woman. She died about four years ago. Their only daughter has moved into the family home. She is a remarkably brainy woman. She is the president of the AAA board for this new year, Jeanne Payne.

Riess: Was Luther Gibson's wife better educated than he was?

Devlin: She had not been to college, to my knowledge. She was also from Santa Cruz, from the Freeman family. Her father worked for a big ink company--I can't think of the name. They had known each other for years and years. Everybody just loved her. She was very pretty, very vivacious, very tiny, just a sparkly sort of person.

Riess: So, the chronology then: the Morning Herald appeared in 1922. And after four months they acquired the Evening Times.[3]

Is this the reason some people resented Gibson?

Devlin: Because he did so much so fast? I think so. He had come here with practically nothing, and there were some who thought, "Well, how did he get so big so fast?"

Riess: Then in 1927 he bought the Evening Chronicle. It sounds like there were a lot of little papers.

Devlin: There were quite a few of them. I'm trying to think. One was a weekly, one or two, but he consolidated them.

Riess: The weekly Antioch Tribune, and the Mare Island Employee--that was the first newspaper base.

Devlin: That was the beginning. Yes.

Riess: There was one reporter, and four men who kept the thing going. No women. In 1928 Gibson bought out his partners. Why did he do that?

Devlin: I think just because he wanted control. I don't think any of them were particularly reluctant. They all remained on very friendly terms. I remember, any time there would be a newspaper party Leonard Laing would be there. Of course, Ken Knight came back to work for Luther many years later. He was city editor there when

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[3]Information from Mare Island Centennial, 1954.

died. Jerry Motzko, I don't know why I associate it, but I'm quite sure he went to Hayward to the newspaper there.

I wouldn't be surprised if they were all delighted to be bought out. But I guess that's why Luther needed more money, and Captain Cox's offer came at a good time.

Vallejo Evening Chronicle Coverage

Riess: In 1930 the paper had a new printing plant, rotary press. It was a period of expansion, but at the same time it was the Depression.

Devlin: Yes. But you wouldn't have known it from the newspaper. What they did, I remember, I replaced a woman who was sent up to become our Fairfield bureau. It was the first time that we had had one of those. I took her job on the Evening Chronicle as society editor.

Riess: That was what you were hired as? Twenty-one years old, and you were the society editor?

Devlin: [laughs] Who knew nothing about Vallejo society. I had left here when I was five. So you can imagine I was rather lacking in expertise.

They had that arrangement where the society page ran in the evening paper, but no sports page. The sports page ran in the morning paper, but no society. In order to get the works, you had to take the two papers. That was the joint subscription deal.

Riess: Yes. That's very interesting. No choice. I guess that's what people wanted?

Devlin: I think they all thought it was a great bargain, and it was.

Riess: The joint operating agreement that the San Francisco Chronicle and the Examiner have gave them control of the whole advertising scene; and advertisers got a better deal if they advertised in both papers.

Devlin: I'm not sure, but I think it was the same here.

I think his feeling was that if he was getting out a good evening paper, and a good morning paper, there was much less chance of anybody else coming into the newspaper business in Vallejo. That did keep others out.

With an evening paper five nights a week, and your morning paper seven days a week, you got a lot for your money. I don't even remember what it cost then, because I didn't pay for it, I got it for free. I know that everybody seemed to feel, "Well, aren't we lucky to get two such papers, really, for the price of one." That was what he boasted about.

Riess: Two completely different staffs though.

Devlin: Yes, if you could call them such. The staff on the Evening Chronicle when I came up--I think this was maybe after about a year--there was the editor, who handled the wire copy, made up the dummies, covered Mare Island by phone, and covered any breaking stories. He was kept pretty busy.

I got out the society page. And I had a telephone beat that was the undertakers, fire department, police department. I got sent out on other stories, and I read all the proofs. We were the staff, two of us.

Riess: So your hours were daytime hours?

Devlin: Yes, they were, then. Then I got out the Sunday Times-Herald pages. I guess that was about the time when I got an assistant.

Riess: Obituaries were handled by calling undertakers? Not phoned in to you?

Devlin: No. I phoned them. We had two undertakers in town then.

And another thing, I called the hotel to see if there were any big parties, or lodge meetings. I remember one day there was a big Moose convention here, and Orvin [B. Gaston], the city editor who later became assistant publisher, sent me up to the hotel to interview the "Big Moose," whoever he was. [laughs]

When I went up they directed me to room so-and-so. I knocked on the door. I could hear a lot of rowdy laughter, and this man opened the door. He happened to be one of my father's old friends, Ed Blanco. Here the men were with glasses in their hands. There were no women.

He looked at me and said, "Wh-what are you doing here?" I said, "Oh, I was sent up. I'm from the newspaper." He said, "You shouldn't be here. You shouldn't be here. You go tell Orvin I said he'd better come up himself." I went back. They were so shocked to see a woman sent up for that.

But I did an awful lot. I told you about the Hunger Marchers the other day. If things would break, and Orvin couldn't get away from the place, I was glad that he had enough faith in me that he really sent me out on a lot of things.

Riess: What would the Moose be doing that would be newsworthy?

Devlin: He wanted me to get some quotes from some of the visiting Moose. This was a convention, or an area meeting, and he wanted some quotes as to what they were doing. I don't remember.

Riess: But the Moose don't make news, do they?

Devlin: It was a big organization in those days. They still have a very big lodge here. And the women of the Moose, my goodness, that was, and still is, quite an active organization.

Proliferating Newsmaking Organizations

Devlin: Organizations have always played a tremendously important part in Vallejo. Vallejo, of course, is a blue collar town. I think we have every fraternal group.

But I'm going off the subject--.

Riess: Oh, but this is something that I'm really interested in. As you speak, I'm looking back at my list of organizations.

Devlin: Every organization was here, and every men's organization had a women's auxiliary, and every group had a junior group.

[telephone interruption]

Riess: I asked you last week about the Snowballs. You weren't able to tell me about them. But the Native Sons of the Golden West, the Masons--.

Devlin: The Masonic Lodges are still big here. The Masonic organization, of course, works hard for the Shriners Hospital, and the Eastern Stars go along with that the same way. The Native Sons have dwindled in numbers, but they still have active groups. Every one of these would sponsor a junior group. We had organization news coming out of our ears.

Senator Gibson's idea was that it's what the people want to read, and we gave them space like they never had before. With the

women's groups, they would go to their state conventions, or even their national conventions, and they would take along our pages, sharing the pictures and the inches of copy. Every inch counted.

The other branches were speechless. "How do you get this in Vallejo?" "Well, the nice lady gives it to us." The "nice lady" gave it to them because Senator Gibson wanted them happy. And it made them happy. He felt that no group was too small.

I remember one thing that I laughed about more times! Garage sales were not held when I was growing up. I had never heard of them. A Benicia group called, and they were going to have a garage sale. I didn't know what it was, but she told me. I had about a one-inch story about a garage sale being held, and I don't know whether one of the printers did it to be funny or not, but it came out as a garbage sale!

Well, of course, I called the women and apologized all over. And she said, "Miss Devlin, don't apologize. We had twice the patronage we would have had, because everybody saw that in the paper and thought it was so funny."

Another stupid error I made took me years to live down! P.T.A was not a big group when I was growing up, and it didn't exist at Anna Head. So here I was turned loose with nine P.T.A units, P.T.A council, district P.T.A. And they all celebrate Founder's Day. I got the first story about P.T.A. Founder's Day, and it was telephoned in by a woman who later became a dear friend of mine. I thought she said "Farmer's Day," so I wrote a story about annual Farmer's Day being celebrated, and it appeared that way. I tell you, it gave the P.T.A members the laugh of the year. But I never forgot.

We ran anything that was newsworthy. The people loved it. It was awfully small town-ish. I enjoyed doing it, and it certainly made Senator Gibson happy.

Riess: You must have worked very closely with the photographer then?

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: Because there were always investitures, new officers, and parties to cover.

Devlin: Yes. And when we ran bridal showers it got to the point where we had to say we would only run one shower picture, because some brides would be having four or five showers. We ran wedding pictures--.

I don't know if I gave you one of my typical Sunday ten-page sections. This was one I happened to keep because the column I wrote was about my grandmother. It was a Mother's Day one. I don't have any other copies. But that was typical. We had art, music, Travis Air Base, navy. I did the page of fashions. I did the food page. We had the inquiring reporter. We had books. And then we had local news.

Miss Devlin's Predecessor, and Assistants

Riess: The woman who had your job, you said that she went up to Fairfield?

Devlin: The Fairfield bureau. She went up to get news for our paper. She had never liked the women's news particularly. She was more of a straight news reporter.

Riess: Where did she get her training?

Devlin: I'm trying to think where she was from. I hear from her every Christmas. She lives down at Hemet.

She liked being in Fairfield, because it was the county seat, of course, so she had the courthouse. That's the type of thing she enjoyed doing. She kept that up until she married. Well, she remarried. Her first husband died, and then she married a retired naval officer, and they moved away.

We've always kept the Fairfield correspondent. They don't have one now, of course, but, when Senator Gibson was there, I think we had two at a time. We also had a Napa bureau. Those were experienced reporters, somebody who had had some real experience.

Riess: When she handed over her files, did she brief you on the groups and P.T.A's and everything ahead of you?

Devlin: Yes. She was wonderfully helpful. She showed me how to set up the dopebook for future events.

Riess: What is the dopebook?

Devlin: Every time a story would appear in the paper mentioning a future event, we had a book, and it would be pasted in on the dated page. So when that event came along we could do a followup if we wanted

to, if we thought it merited. Meanwhile, we got out a daily and then a weekly calendar of events. Here was all our material right in the dopebook.

I can't remember when I got my first assistant. Then I can't remember when I got my second full-time assistant, but I had the most remarkable people helping me. They're both best friends. The first one came to me from Vallejo High School, where she had worked on the high school newspaper. After working in my department for, I guess, two or three years, she was taken away from our paper by the Vallejo Evening News, which was still in existence. Jeannette Davis. She went there to work.

When that paper folded she was married and had a couple of children, and she didn't want to come back to work. After her oldest daughter was grown there was a vacancy on my staff, and her mother said, would I consider her daughter if she trained her at home and had her completely informed as to what she was to do? She came to work with me, and remained until the strike. Then she went out on the strike with me and we all started the new little newspaper.

Riess: How interesting.

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: What was the daughter's name?

Devlin: Mary Ann Magnuson. She was just so capable and competent. So was her mother. When our strike newspaper ended we all worried about her, because she was widowed and had two children. Wyman [Riley] was able to get her a very good position at Mare Island. She enjoys it very much. I see her frequently.

Riess: Over the years a lot of your systems for getting the news must have changed, like the obituaries. What changed to make it more possible for you to take on this tremendous amount of work?

Devlin: Well, as business picked up, and as times picked up, they added reporters who took over my phone beat, for instance. The fire department, the police and the obituaries, I didn't handle then except special obituaries, prominent women who would die.

Thoughts on Newswriting Style

Devlin: Funny, the only stories I give to the present Times-Herald are obituaries of old-timers, whose families will ask if I will do it. I did one two weeks ago for my next door neighbor's brother. When I did it I gave her a carbon copy of it, and I said, "Now, don't expect this story to appear in print the way it is." She called me to thank me for it the day it appeared. They had done a fairly good job.

Two or three times I went to Jimmie Jones, the general director, who was a copy boy when he first came to work for us, and I said, "This woman"--it happened to be Mrs. Henry Widenmann, and she was in her nineties--I said, "She was one of the most beloved and best-known women here, and I don't want them to refer to her in the story as 'Widenmann.'" Which they would do. They would not say "Mrs."

Riess: Oh, my goodness. That seems so poor.

Devlin: It was. I went to Jimmie and I said, "I'm asking this as a favor." He said, "I guess you're right." Now they do put in "Mrs."

Also I told him, and I don't think he believed it, I said, "And you don't refer to the men by their last names." I said, "The San Francisco Chronicle doesn't." They have good obituaries, I think. My niece usually sends me the Sunday Washington Post and they refer to a woman as "Mrs.," and they refer to the man, after using his full name, as "Mr." So, I think I've done that much with the present paper. But they do a sad job on obituaries. They're awful.

Riess: That reminds me of the rule when I worked on a newspaper, and that was you never said "groom," you always said "bridegroom."

Devlin: No. A groom took care of horses.

Riess: That's right.

Devlin: That was in the A.P. news book, the little rule book, whatever it was.

Riess: But still people refer to grooms.

Devlin: The "bride and groom," I know it. I remember that. We had to go by the A.P. style book all the way.

Riess: Did you have someone editing your copy, this one other person who was on the editorial side, or were you on your own?

Devlin: I made up my dummy, after the ad department gave it to me and I knew the space available.

When I began down there, we did not have a photographer. I suppose they had one on call for important things, but there weren't pictures on my pages. If they were they were canned, they were mats. No, my page was my own. He may have gone out in the composing room and looked at it without my knowledge. I would have trusted him completely if he did. He and I were very good working companions. Really, he was one of my closest friends on the paper. He died many years ago, too. All the good ones did.

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The College Girl, and the Composing Room Gang

Riess: Please finish what you were going to say about the composing room crew.

Devlin: When I first began, Orvin Gaston I liked. His mother and my father had graduated from high school together, so I knew the family. I knew that he would be, kind of, keeping a watchful eye. But I didn't know one person in the composing room, and I was scared to death of them. They would barely speak to me when I would go out in the morning. I would give them my little chirpy "Hellos," and they'd grunt.

I was really scared to pieces of them, but they just became such dear friends. If I would make a stupid mistake they would call me out very quietly and point it out. They wouldn't do it in front of Orvin. I did make a lot of stupid mistakes, I'm sure, but they became the biggest help in the world. Through all my years there, I just think the composing room bunches were the greatest friends ever.

Riess: How would they catch mistakes?

Devlin: The make-up men who worked on my pages, and the others, they would see a misspelling--. I remember a little one. I spelled Pittsburg, California with an "h." One of the type-setters came in and said, "Now, you know, I want to show you something. Come out here a minute."

Something else that I always got wrong, I can't remember what it was, he would call me out and point it out, and I never forgot, just because he made that effort. They all were so helpful. Some of them said later on, "We didn't know what you were going to be like. We heard you were coming up from college, and you thought you were hot stuff." They just couldn't have been more wrong. I was so cowed to be on a real newspaper.

Riess: They did the proof-reading, too. Did they?

Devlin: No. I read the proofs.

Riess: Did you ever find mistakes that they had made?

Devlin: Oh, there were errors, whether they were typographical or--. Oh, yes. The proofs had to be read very carefully.

Riess: Was it a problem then to tell them when they had made an error?

Devlin: I didn't tell them. I just hung the proofs on the hook and they got them, because I didn't know whose they were.

Publisher, Politician, and Philanthropist: Luther Gibson

Riess: What you've just said about them thinking, "Here comes this college girl, she'll think she knows everything," that's a dilemma in a blue collar community, isn't it?

Devlin: Yes. I think it was. Senator Gibson, I think, was very leery about making any suggestions to me. He would make them through Orvin Gaston. Anything that Orvin said I usually knew came from Luther, in the early years. Later on he might have said something, or suggested something.

Basically, he was rather a shy man. Rather unsure of himself. Not socially, and not in the business world, but on the newspaper. He would come in in the mornings, head down, shoulders down, go down to his office, and barely speak to anybody. He just wasn't able to project himself. I think he was afraid we would think he <u>was</u> projecting himself, which he certainly not.

Riess: How did he get as far as he got? How did he go from being a printer to a senator?

Devlin: He made a lot of friends in the business community here. He played golf regularly with the wheelers and dealers. He entertained beautifully. Their last home, the one close by here, is a beautiful place. The home before that was a beautiful place, but not very large, a one-story house. But they entertained very, very graciously.

The one thing that he did that was remarkable for Vallejo, he established the closest rapport with Mare Island that there had ever been. The moment a new commanding officer or an engineering officer or any of them came, he and his wife gave a party for them, maybe at their home or at the country club. Consequently, of course, they were included in all the navy parties. He just mingled.

Riess: And he wasn't troubled by his lack, perhaps, of sophistication?

Devlin: No. Because he absorbed it as he went along. He was probably the leading one in getting our country club up here, Green Valley Country Club. And was, I think, president of that. Was active in it all his life. Took out a membership for himself and his wife, one for his daughter, and one that he told me I was to use whenever I wanted to entertain there. I think Orvin Gaston was the only other one that was included in that.

He did so many good things for people that were never known. I remember when our circulation manager died--and he had been a very loyal employee--he paid off the remaining loan on his house for the widow. When the daughter of one of our supervisors died, and he knew the family didn't have too much, he went up and paid for the funeral before the family could do it, and would not let anyone know about it. I knew about it because Orvin Gaston leaked it to me, but I would never have known otherwise.

He made friends, and he acquired a smoothness, and I don't know if you would say necessarily a polish, but yes, I think you would. In later years he and his wife traveled to Europe on a couple of trips. They went to Tahoe every summer, up to Glenbrook. I don't mean this the way it sounds, but he did all the right things with the right people and became very, very highly respected. There still were people who resented him in the community, but on the whole he was looked up to as a man who had done so much for Vallejo. Gave so many things.

When our second Catholic church was established here it was diagonally across from their former home. And Monsignor [Thomas] Byrne told me years later that all of the cement work for the parking area and the sidewalks had been paid for by Luther Gibson,

who was a staunch Presbyterian! He was a great philanthropist. Really.

Riess: When he bought the paper do you think that he had ambitions beyond owning a newspaper?

Devlin: Oh, I wouldn't be surprised.

Riess: Political influence?

Devlin: Yes. He was a great supporter of Earl Warren's, a lifelong Democrat and a great supporter of Warren's.

When he first went up to Sacramento as state senator he gave a huge dinner at the Senator Hotel for the men who had worked for him for his election. Earl Warren was there, and all the big shots. Earl was governor then. He also had been a great friend of my father's. But it was a stag dinner, of course.

I had been in charge of Luther's campaign office from February [1948], when it was established, until November, when he was elected. (He had hoped to win in the primary.) He was most apologetic because I couldn't be included, but he sent me a beautiful gold vanity case with a suitable inscription.

I learned many years later, after Mary Ellen Leary and I became friends, that she also received a gift from him, and a note saying that he was so sorry he couldn't include her. He told me that we were the only two women that he would have loved having there--in addition to his wife--whom he couldn't have. He was thoughtful.

Riess: I'm ignorant. When was he elected?

Devlin: I should remember that. I'll have to look it up. I would guess it was in the '40s. [Luther Gibson was State Senator from Solano County from 1949-1966.]

Riess: Did Luther Gibson ever write editorials for the paper?

Devlin: No. And he was very self-conscious about that. No, his editorials--. He might tell Orvin what he wanted said and have Orvin write it. He was self-conscious about his lack of formal education.

He had a very good secretary, and when she went on vacation he would ask Orvin to have me do his letters. (Orvin couldn't type them, and after my father retired I had done his letters at home.) He would tell Orvin, "Now, you interpret this if she

doesn't understand it." They [the letters] were poorly-written, but I could make them out. I might do a tiny bit of editing as I went along. [laughs] He was self-conscious about having anybody else, or any of the other stenographers, see his writing.

Also, a few years before he died, Orvin Gaston very wisely decided that we should get together the history of his [Luther Gibson's] life. So Orvin had him [Luther Gibson] tell Orvin, and then I typed it up. That was on file when he died. It was a complete picture of his life and years and everything else.

Riess: What has happened to it?

Devlin: I don't know, but I understand that the morgue is not available to people who go in.

We used to have the most fabulous morgue and the most marvelous librarian. People would come there for reference. If they were known, they could even take the files home, if they signed for them. But I understand that they don't do that at all now.

Riess: Well, that's probably a good idea, but they should at least give people access. Not to take it home.

Devlin: We never had any problem with it, because our librarian would follow through and get them.

Senator Gibson would have out-of- town visitors from Sacramento, or prominent people, and he would love to stop at the library and say to Bernice, "Would you get out the file on this gentlemen." She'd present it, and the man would be amazed! Here would be a very complete file.

Political Slant of Gibson's Newspapers

Riess: The political view of the paper was Gibson's Democratic Party view?

Devlin: Yes. He received a lot of criticism for one thing: for a number of years the morning paper was definitely Democratic. The evening paper they more or less gave to the Republicans for their promotion and publicity. So, of course, he was accused of being a mugwump, and sitting on the fence, but he felt he was playing fair with his Republican friends. Although the Democrats got the better paper, the morning paper.

Riess: So you would have wire service columnists who were more liberal for the morning edition?

Devlin: That's correct. Then, after the papers were consolidated, more or less, it was definitely pro-Democrat, but he gave the Republicans fair play too. And--. I'll get back to that later.

When he ran for office he had a steering committee that met every Friday morning up in my headquarters at the hotel. I would say that that committee was just about equal Republicans and Democrats. The smart businessmen and professional men knew that he would be good for Vallejo, and God knows that he was.

Riess: That's interesting.

Back to this leeriness that he might have had of you because of your education, did you have to "write down" for the community, do you think?

Devlin: Oh, no.

Riess: I mean, were you and your vocabulary more highfalutin when you arrived?

Devlin: I don't think I was ever highfalutin. [laughter] I really don't. He appreciated things.

Marion Devlin, receiving the award at the California Newspaper Publishers Association convention, 1947, for Best Women's Page. Carl P. Hiller, CNPA president, presents the cup.

Marion Devlin, center, discussing layout for a special society section. Left to right: Gerry Parrick, commercial artist; Louise Johnson, editor of Sunday music section; Anita Garrett and Ola Hettinger, standing, assistant editors; E. M. Polley, art section editor; and unidentified Travis Air Force Base correspondent. (Parrick did ad layouts, special editorial covers, made up the Sunday social covers, and did airbrush work and retouching as needed.) The table [in response to interviewer's question] is glass-topped conference room table. Photographed in the 1950s.

IV MARION DEVLIN'S PAGES

A Raise and a Weekly Column

Devlin: I remember one thing that has never failed to impress me. I was so pleased with my $18 a week, and I was doing beautifully on it, supporting a car and paying half of my sister's apartment, and having money to spare. But when I had been on the paper I guess about two years, somebody, I think Orvin, told me that I could get a good feature story in Benicia at a wonderful old house called Hastings Folly. (I don't know if you've ever heard about it? It's the family of Hastings Law School.)

I went over there, and I wrote one of the best stories, or a story that I was more pleased with, than nearly anything. I took over a photographer with me. Talked to old-time Benicians. And my father gave me a lot of background. That story ran in a Sunday paper. It occupied a full page. It's been reprinted since in the Historical Society Magazine. It was a good story.

When Luther saw the story he gave Orvin the dickens. "Why wasn't there some promotion on that story? That's the best thing that's ever happened. Bring Marion up to the office, I'm raising her pay to $22.50 a week." I got my first raise without even asking for it! He read things. He was impressed with that story, to think that somebody would go over--.

Well, any good reporter would see that the story was just fabulous. It was a magnificent old home. It was used for years by the Catholic Convent. There had been a lot of tragedies in the home. Oh, it just made a wonderful story. I'll see if I have a copy of it. Whenever I would do a story or a feature like that--well, of course, when I went to the coronation--he was impressed. He liked stories that were showy, and that he felt added prestige to the newspaper.

He's the one who hounded me, and I was almost in tears, when he demanded a weekly column. I didn't care for creative writing. I've never wanted to write a book or a magazine article. I like

the editing, the layouts, and the makeup. That's my favorite part of the paper. But he demanded a Sunday column. So I started in, and it was blood, sweat and tears getting them out.

Riess: Was it supposed to be opinions?

Devlin: No. No.

Riess: Or social notes?

Devlin: No. Just a column, like the one on Mother's Day that you have seen.

Then he demanded that full cover page of pictures and my column every Sunday. And so every Sunday there was some local event or coming event featured in pictures, or it might be an important wedding, or two or three important weddings. And I wrote a column about whatever I wanted. Most of them were nostalgia columns, because that was about the only thing I could think up, or things that were happening here. Mrs. Reagan came to town while he [Ronald Reagan] was Governor, and I would do a column on her. And, of course, during the war years there were so many celebrities coming over to visit the hospital that I got a lot of interviews there.

He was very impressed with the fact that I got to be included regularly with the San Francisco presswomen. For instance, I remember when Queen Juliana was at the Fairmont [Hotel] there were about six of us down there to have coffee and sweet rolls with her. When Queen Fredericka and King Paul of Greece were there, and he spoke at the Commonwealth Club, I had a chance to get a brief story with her.

Photographers, Layout

Riess: You say that when you started out there was no photographer. What was the arrangement? Would you call in a local photographer?

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: And then when did they first become part of your staff?

Devlin: We called in this Bill Platt just out of high school--he may have had a year of college, but no more. He was an excellent photographer, and he was on call. He was doing other photographic

work. Then he became so good, and his pictures were so good, that he was put on full time.

Riess: Was there a darkroom?

Devlin: He shared a darkroom with somebody about a block away from the paper. Then, when we moved down to the big plant, they set up a darkroom. We had Bill, and we added another photographer and a photoengraver.

After a very bad fire, and the new building was put up, we had replaced the old photoengraver and we had two photographers. So we had somebody day and night. They're both here in Vallejo and they're two of the best photographers I ever knew. Marvelous. The original photographer died. Gordon Shaffer is now a free lance photographer and very active in community affairs. Wes Gibson is in the photo lab at Mare Island.

Riess: Didn't you have to think twice about whether you could include a photograph? Or did you always have enough space?

Devlin: The space was dependent upon our needs, usually. The same thing with the Travis page, and the navy. (Luther Gibson loved the navy page.)

Riess: But as you filled more space with events and photographs, didn't that mean that somebody had to go out and sell more advertising?

Devlin: No, I don't think so. I would tell Orvin Gaston, who made up the dummies for all the paper. (He, of course, was no longer editor, he was second only to Luther, assistant publisher.) If I needed a lot of space, I usually got it. I don't ever remember having to really fight for it. Certain pages, like the art and music, had no advertising. The food and fashion had ads, but I dummied around them.

Riess: Did you have any say in placement of fashion ads?

Devlin: None.

Riess: Because you certainly can do a lot with that to influence readers.

Devlin: No, I didn't, really. I just took the dummies as they were given to me. We always got out a spring and fall fashion edition, of course. They sold a lot of advertising for that. My two assistants and I did the copy.

Riess: Did you ever go to Paris for the fashions?

Devlin: Never. I had no interest in that. I ran all the fashion copy from Paris and Milan.

Riess: You talk about wire services, and I'm wondering about Bay Area papers. Did you have hot-off-the-press stories from other Bay Area papers? The Chronicle and Examiner, did you turn to them for anything?

Devlin: No. Sometimes they would suggest something to me, a lead on a story, you know. I used a lot of canned copy. God knows we have plenty of canned food copy to fill in, and fashion copy if I needed to fill up. But usually with all those lodges we had lots. Padded the stories a little bit.

Prize-Winning Social Pages

Riess: There was a Sunday morning paper, but you were just doing the evening paper, so you weren't involved. But you had a column?

Devlin: Yes. There was one Sunday page of society that I did in addition to the five night pages. Then I remember when Jim Ritch was editor of the morning paper he told me that Luther wanted two Sunday pages. I thought, "I can't fill them. I just can't." In no time at all I was screaming for more room, more space. We went from the one page to two. Then we went to four. Then we went to ten when we added Travis and navy. Then, depending on the ads, we would get out twelve and fourteen pages.

Riess: These were the ones that became the prize-winners for you, weren't they?

Devlin: Not necessarily. In submitting for prizes we had to consider the photography, the reproduction and we would get out maybe a dozen of the best sections. Then Orvin and Wyman and I would go through them, and they would see things that I might not be aware of. Finally, we came down to the ones that we thought stood a pretty good chance. I think we had to send in three different copies.

Riess: I didn't realize that you submitted. The paper itself submits.

Devlin: Yes, and you can submit in different categories. One time, I know, our paper won general excellence. We won first in that, which is the most coveted of all. Wyman Riley also won for a series of articles he did on preparations for war. It was a tour that he made with a news group when he interviewed Chiang Kai-shek in Taiwan. Then Dave Beronio won, I think, on sports. Our

department, of course, won the most. [laughs] So we got more attention.

Riess: How about church news? Did that take up a lot of space?

Devlin: Well, that didn't go in my section, except social events, the churchwomen, the Episcopal women with their big annual bazaar, things like that would be social. But church news had its own page, a full page that ran every Saturday.

Taking Note of Vallejo's Ethnic Makeup

Devlin: The last two blocks of Virginia Street was our Chinatown. There were not many Chinese, but the ones who were, were good, good people. A few of them worked as domestics. There was a Chinese food store, very few Filipinos then, a relatively small group of blacks. Although there were two black churches that were well patronized. The blacks whom I knew were well thought of, and there weren't troubles between the blacks. Of course, later on there were.

Riess: Were they integrated into any of the Vallejo social clubs?

Devlin: I don't know about Rotary and Kiwanis. The Soroptimists Club, to which I belong, is fifty years old. We had a very popular Chinese member. She still is a life member, although she lives at Tahoe. We now have three black members. I think the first black member came in maybe thirty years ago. I presume there are the same in Rotary and Kiwanis. I don't know. Rotary was the first service club here. That was established in the late '20s. It was in existence when I came up. Then Kiwanis followed.

Riess: Membership is by invitation?

Devlin: Yes. I think you can be blackballed. I don't know. It's just my guess.

Now, of course, we have a huge population of Asians, primarily Filipinos. They have taken over, in large measure, these little private rest homes for convalescents. There's a huge number of them here. I have friends in two or three of them where they will take in five adults. The two I've been to have been immaculately run. My friends--one of them is the widow of one of the newspapermen, and she is very pleased with the care. There are a lot of Filipino nurses at the hospitals.

Riess: That's interesting.

When you were doing your social page, was there ever any incident of censorship? Was there any group that you ever got word that Luther Gibson or someone would like you to downplay?

Devlin: No. Never.

The first exposure I had to a big Negro social event --and I guess they still have them periodically--they began having debutante balls here. They had the first one at the Casa de Vallejo, which was our biggest hotel. To my astonishment, the head of the group, whom I had known for a long time, came and asked me if I would be the one to present the debutantes. I was trying to think--. I said, "Well, I'm never in Vallejo Saturday nights. I always go down to my parents' home." (Which was true, but why couldn't I change?)

Riess: When do you think this would have been? About what year?

Devlin: I would say this was in the late '30s.

I said, "Well, let me think it over." So, of course, I went immediately to Luther Gibson and Orvin and said, "What should I do?" They said, "Do it, by all means. It's a nice thing to do, a nice gesture. We'll send up a photographer and get a picture of all the debutantes." I said, "Just so I'm not in the picture." So I did, and I was as nervous as could be, but they were so pleased and so nice. I did that, I guess, each year that they had them. I was more than happy to do it.

Most of the black people I knew were nice people. I'm sure there were plenty of the other kind, but I didn't come in contact with them. Now, you get rather nervous with some of the types you see around here, but they were really very fine. We had a quite a few, a couple, who worked in the school department who were good news sources. No, I think if anything, Luther Gibson would have bent over backwards.

I also remember, and these things we didn't have in Berkeley, the police and firemen had an annual ball on Thanksgiving eve. They came down and asked me if I would attend. They were going to broadcast it on the radio station, which Luther owned. It was going to be broadcast, and they wanted me to stand on the stage and describe the gowns of the prominent ladies there. (This was mid-'30s.)

I said, "I won't know enough of the women," because they were mostly police and firemen's wives and I didn't know who they were.

Well, they assured me that one of the men would stand right alongside of me and whisper, "That's Mrs. So-and-So. Please describe her dress." And I would then say, "Mrs. So-and-So looks lovely in this--."

Well, I was hysterical. I just thought I couldn't do it. As I told you, I was afraid to get up in class to recite at Berkeley! I went home. I didn't confer with Luther on that, I conferred with my parents. My mother was all for me not doing it. She said, "You'll be too nervous." Dad said, "No. Go ahead and do it. If they think you can, and Luther thinks you can, by all means." Then I went to Luther, "Oh, by all means." So I was stuck with that for about four or five Thanksgiving nights, and it was awful! I would give anything if I had a recording of that!

Riess: Was there a Jewish population in Vallejo then, and were they included in the social life?

Devlin: A very small one, but very, very fine people. The leading jeweler in town was Isadore Meyer. He and his two sons owned jewelry stores here, and then later in Napa. There were more or less leaders of the Jewish colony, which I would say was rather small. Although there were some Jewish doctors, dentists, all successful professional men.

Riess: Were they members of the country club?

Devlin: I was trying to think if Isadore was one of the charter members of the country club. I don't remember, but I know some of the doctors were. I don't think there was any feeling there, that I know of. They all took a rather active part in, for instance, the men's service clubs. Things like that.

Riess: There was a synagogue up here, or a temple?

Devlin: Yes. There is a beautiful temple. Now, I think, we have a larger group, and a very fine group, including Harry Gray, a retired college professor who has written a series of books on California personalities. I have them all here because one of them has quite a mention of my father. And I think they are all down at the Bancroft Library. He sent them all down there. He's a wonderful person. He gives a lecture series on California history. A good friend.

Broadcast Journalism

Devlin: Besides the Thanksgiving broadcasts, then Luther had me broadcasting every day on the radio station. Wyman Riley, Dave Beronio and I had a Saturday broadcast together. During the war all the men were gone, and so I was doing the world news, the international news, any kind of news, a fifteen-minute broadcast at noon.

Riess: Reading from your own written copy?

Devlin: Wire copy primarily, and then my own for local copy.

Riess: It's interesting the way you were propelled into a position of great social eminence in Vallejo.

Devlin: Broken in right away.

Riess: And still not yet thirty years old.

Devlin: No, I was twenty-one when I came up here. I think it was the best thing that could have happened to me, but on looking back I don't know how I had the nerve to do it. Except I was more afraid of Luther Gibson than anybody. Not afraid of him, but I mean, if he would say, "I want you to do it," I did it.

He and all the men on the paper were so supportive. Oh, the men ridiculed me like mad. When I would come back from the debutante ball the newsroom would collapse hearing some of my stories. But it was great experience. They pulled more awful pranks on me! They just made life a great joy, I'll say that. For so long I was the only woman in the newsroom. I got along with the men, and I had never worked with men before. I miss them. I liked working with them.

Riess: Yes, I can see how it would make a wonderful life.

When you came back with stories, do you think you had any sense of irony or cynicism, or were you quite without side, as it were? When you would come back with your debutante stories, did you think that the whole thing was kind of silly?

Devlin: No, I thought it was kind of touching. To see those black girls looking their prettiest.

Riess: It sounds like there was nearly an excess of social activity around here.

Devlin: Oh, there was. I would get invited to every P.T.A luncheon and P.T.A. installation. I was made an honorary life member of the California Congress of Parents and Teachers, which meant I had to go to all the P.T.A. things.

The funny thing is--having just said how I loved working with the men--I liked working with women too. They were easy to work with, and so appreciative of the paper and of the fact that practically anything they wanted, within reason, they got. The photographers, they thought they were wonderful too. They were.

Riess: And you lunched out on chicken salad every day?

Devlin: No wonder I put on weight like mad. I haven't been able to lose it.

Working Hours and Social Responsibilities

Riess: Were you able to say "no" in the evenings? How many hours a week do you think you worked on this newspaper?

Devlin: I couldn't tell you, because I never kept track. With the Sunday sections, which were really important to me because I loved them, I would work Friday nights until about 11:00. Being right down at the printing plant there, I could go out to the composing room and see how the pages were coming and make any suggestions. The two makeup men I worked with were experts. Then I might go down to Berkeley. I would always come up Saturday morning so I'd be here at noon to read the page proofs. Now that's something that very few people ever do.

Both my assistants, who lived in Vallejo, volunteered to come down and do it. "Well," I'd say, "come on down and read them with me if you want, but I'm going to come up." I just felt that. Particularly writing my column, I wanted to be sure. Then I'd go down to Berkeley Saturday afternoon. I worked about three evenings a week in the office, simply because I liked it. In the evenings I wasn't interrupted as much. I had a beautiful, comfortable office there, a wonderful typewriter. [laughs] Not like mine at home. I could get so much more done. Then I could, if I wanted to, accept invitations to things in the daytime.

I had decided, out of my own pointed little mind, that I would not join any organization, because then I couldn't be accused of favoring that over any others. I thought I was so smart! Boy, did I get called down by Orvin and Luther, because when the Soroptimists invited me to join as a charter member, I gave my little speech: "No, I'm sorry. I don't join any organizations." Well, they had a very impressive charter night installation at the hotel, invited all the dignitaries, all the Soroptimists from Oakland, invited the Gibsons and the Gastons.

When the Gibsons and the Gastons got there and saw the women who were included who were the top professional and executive women of Vallejo, they immediately wanted to know why I hadn't been invited. The new president said, "Oh, we invited Marion. We urged her several times and she declined." Senator Gibson said, without even consulting me, "Well, I want her name put on the charter list. I am paying the charter fee, and the initiation, and I will speak to her Monday." And believe me, he spoke.

"How could I have been so stupid! That was the most outstanding, representative group. Of course he wanted me to belong--." Paid my dues. Really, I never felt so foolish in my life. So then, after that I did join the College Women's Club. I was the president of Soroptimists for some years back, and the College Women's Club. Then, when Lilac Branch of Children's Hospital was organized, I joined that. Those are the only three I have continued in.

Riess: They are almost nonsectarian, in a way.

Devlin: Right. And, of course, it doesn't matter now, anyway. They all felt that they got such good publicity, but no more than any other organization.

World War II, Extra, Extra

Devlin: Both of my parents were excellent speakers. My mother dwelt on grammar, pronunciation and things of the sort. My father had a great voice. He was one of the much-in-demand Liberty Bond speakers during World War I.

Vallejo was absolutely booming immediately before the war. We had this tremendous influx of people coming from all over. This was while the European war was going on, but before we were in it. I don't think that any of us really anticipated the Pacific war. At least we didn't seem to feel it was near.

One thing that makes me sure of that is that in the spring of '41 I went out to Honolulu on a visit, at my parents' insistence. They wanted me to take a trip, and my close friend and sorority sister had just gone out there and gotten a good job. My brother-in-law was gunnery officer on the Detroit, and he promised me a good time. His wife was home and pregnant, and he was lonesome for someone from home. So I went out there and saw an awful lot of the navy people who had been at Mare Island. Oh, they all talked about the possibility of war, but I don't think any of us really thought it would happen.

Then, of course, the day of Pearl Harbor, I was in San Francisco at a luncheon. The newspaper called my home in Berkeley. They called me and told to get back to Vallejo immediately, and they called in everybody on the staff who was within telephone reach to get out an extra. That was in the days of extras, of course, happening on a Sunday. The whole bunch of us converged. What they wanted me for was a roundup of all the Mare Island people in Honolulu I had seen, all the navy ones. What they were doing, and what the feeling was on war.

As far as the women's section [of the paper] is concerned, once we were into the war, Mare Island just, of course, burst at the seams. All these families came in. There were two huge government housing projects: Carquinez Heights and Chabot Terrace. For the women's news, for all kinds of news for what are loosely called personals, we had a correspondent in each government housing project who wrote a column of news, for instance, on Chabot Terrace happenings.

The newcomers out there who had come from Oklahoma and Arkansas--the ones we always talked about, the Okies and the Arkies--those people, and the women in particular, were just thrilled to pieces to see their names and their little happenings and their parties and anniversaries appear in the newspaper, because in their home town newspapers they were ignored, they were little people.

Well, our circulation went up. Not due to that alone, but I think that that had an awful lot to do with the fact that the Times-Herald was looked upon as a big family newspaper. No item was too small. The woman who did the Chabot Terrace news was a very dear person without any newspaper experience, but whom everybody loved. My word, she would come in every day from there with boxes of candies and homemade cakes and things. She remained on as one of my two assistants in those days.

I think it, more or less, confirmed Senator Gibson's belief that the women's section is important. He always felt--and I think I may have said this before--that the woman represents the major buying power in the family. She decides if they can afford a new car--with the husband, of course--buys the clothes and the household appliances. As the advertising for the women's section increased, he felt that his opinion was confirmed, that it deserved all this space and all this attention. It did, I think.

Riess: At that time, right after Pearl Harbor when you all converged and got out the extra, who would have been the key people? Would Senator Gibson have been there?

Devlin: I don't remember him being there at all. Orvin Gaston was. He later became the assistant publisher. He was my city editor on the Evening Chronicle. As I told you, in those first years there were just the two of us. He was a tremendously expert newsman in my book.

Others heard the news on the radio and came on down. Two or three of the key people whom we wanted, like Wyman Riley, we couldn't find. He had taken his family over to a picnic on the beach. Most of them came in, and we had an extra out by late afternoon. People, of course, were just buying them right and left. We had newsboys. We assembled enough newsboys to go and hawk them at various key corners.

Riess: It would be all wire service, the extras? Wire service plus your human interest?

Devlin: Plus local. Yes. The sports editor mentioned, I remember, some of the sports figures who were already in the service. Of course, a lot of them had volunteered and were overseas for the European front. I wish to heaven I had kept some of those extras, but we didn't. That was the beginning of the war effort.

Women's Section Expands

Riess: As editor of the women's section, did you sit in on top editorial discussions?

Devlin: Not early on. It was usually Senator Gibson, Orvin Gaston, Wyman Riley, the advertising manager and the circulation manager. They were, more or less, the key people. Then there were other things where--he wasn't Senator then, but--Luther Gibson, and Orvin Gaston, and Wyman and I would sit in on things.

Senator Gibson always had this concept of women's news being vitally important, which very, very few newspapers had believed. They certainly don't believe it in today's Lifestyle page in the Times-Herald. Now virtually every day the Lifestyle page consists of a calendar of meetings, Ann Landers' column, and if space permits, Erma Bombeck. Maybe, depending on space, four to six little one or two inch stories on meetings that they considered of importance.

Riess: What a difference. Do they do weddings on Saturdays?

Devlin: On Sundays they run a very few weddings or engagements.

We had a time limit. Sometimes the pictures would come in and we would make allowances, but we wouldn't run a wedding if it was three or four months old. Now they run them if they are six months old.

They had one prize recently! (I mailed it back to my niece or I would show it to you.) Last Sunday, a picture of a bride and groom. The pictures are awful. They chop them all down to two-column size, and instead of cropping in so you see the faces, they leave all the side stuff in. (I was a great believer in cropping. I loved photo work.) This was a picture of a bride and groom, a nice-looking young couple, the bride with the veil and all the trimmings.

The final line in the sentence said, "The wedding was attended by their two-month-old baby and twenty-five guests--"and the baby was pictured in the bridegroom's arms. [laughter] A collectors item. I couldn't believe it! That happens a lot, but you don't usually put it in the paper. But yes, they do run one page on Sunday with engagements, weddings and anniversaries. That is all.

Riess: Is there a weekly here?

Devlin: No. Now Fairfield has a good newspaper. Vacaville has a very good newspaper, and the Napa Register is a good paper. So area news up there, I'm sure, gets pretty good coverage, but Vallejo organizations have just screamed like crazy all these years, because we did spoil them. But I think it was good for the times, and it was certainly good for the paper.

Riess: Having the social news in the evening paper, is the idea that the housewife is doing laundry in the morning and otherwise occupied?

Devlin: I think that's right.

Riess: The morning newspaper is for the husband at the table over breakfast?

Devlin: Reading sports. The evening paper, I think they felt, the lady of the house could sit down and read and relax. Then, of course, that was all changed. The Evening Chronicle became a weekly, a Wednesday night paper, and that was strictly local.

I learned that--I wouldn't have remembered it--from that little folder you gave me, the newspaper survey.[4] That was done primarily to keep out competition. Then it went so that the women's news was in every morning, and the great big section on Sunday. That seemed to really please people.

Whatever we were doing, apparently, was what the powers that be on the newspapers liked. They liked it because the reading public seemed to like it. And if I would occasionally sound off to Wyman when I felt that we were being slighted in coverage or something, that I felt the women's section was not getting all that it should, he would listen, but I seldom won. We had a very good working agreement.

As I say over and over, Senator Gibson was really a remarkable person. I think he was way ahead of himself as a publisher. I remember when I first came up here, one of the women who had worked for him said to me, "You know, Marion, he doesn't like talking to any of the women on the paper. If you ever want to ask him for anything, or ask for a raise, put it in writing." I remembered that he was uncomfortable, until it got to the point where he and his wife and family and I were all such good friends that he had to realize that he didn't have to walk on tiptoe.

He was nervous around women who worked for him, but then we got to a wonderful--. Every time I won one of the CNPA [California Newspaper Publishers Association] awards he and his wife would give a beautiful great big dinner for me, and all my staff, and so forth. And I think I figured that at one time, with the part-time people, and of course navy, Travis, books, music, art, garden, sidewalk reporter, there were actually ten or twelve people contributing to that women's section. So it was certainly not a one- or a three-woman effort.

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[4] A Region's Press: Anatomy of Newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area, by William L. Rivers and David M. Rubin, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1971.

Page Makeup

Riess: Tell me about a typical day. What were the steps when you first arrived in the office?

Devlin: When I first started, of course, I worked a regular nine-to-four shift. That was for the old Chronicle. We used wire copy for food, and for an occasional fashion story, and anything else that was of particular interest in women's news stories. Then, as we expanded and as we got into the full coverage--. I was just blessed all those years with the most marvelous people in my department. Two full time helpers. One of them, Ola Hettinger, did a local food feature every week.

Riess: What do you mean "local food feature?"

Devlin: She would go out and interview somebody who was a very good cook. A photographer would go along and get a picture, either with a finished product or whipping it up. She would do a local feature. We would run a food page, then, one night a week. On Sunday, my food page was all wire copy, primarily handouts from the manufacturers because they came with such gorgeous photography.

As I am sure I have said, I love makeup. That's my favorite part of the paper. I made up the food and fashion pages in the Sunday paper. The fashion pages were all wire copy, except if there was a big fashion show like this one yesterday. We would have local pictures for that.

Riess: In fashion stories you get sketches of models over the wire?

Devlin: Oh, yes.

One thing that our paper was famous for, and the current one is notorious for, we had a fabulous photoengraving department. Our reproduction was excellent. Two full-time and a third swinger photographers. They were great. Fortunately, they liked working with my department, which some photographers can't stand. The two--Wes Gibson, who's now in the photo lab at Mare Island, and Gordon Shaffer, who spends most of his time traveling around the world with his wife--they're two of my closest friends. We always worked well and pleasantly together. They took great pride in shooting those full pages for our cover pages.

For years, the Sunday cover pages were made up and pasted together by Luther Gibson. That became just a hobby of his. He would be in there Friday--. He and his wife would probably have been out at a cocktail party or dinner party. (If anybody else had brought in Sunday copy Friday night it wouldn't have gone. I wouldn't have had it.) He would be in his office putting the pictures together. Calling me in occasionally, "How does this look?"

I would say, "Well, I'm just about ready to leave." (This would be around eleven o'clock or so.)

"Well, you go home now. I'll take this down to the plant."

That woman's section just meant an awful lot to him.

Riess: Well, it meant a lot to you. I should think you would have been a little annoyed.

Devlin: I was glad to have him take the responsibility. That was only for a few years. Then I think he decided, maybe, I had the mentality to do something halfway decent. Then I made up the photo pages too. I always wrote the copy for it.

Riess: The skill and the eye and the sense of what a good-looking page is, do you think you picked that up in your Vallejo job, or way back in working with the Daily Cal?

Devlin: No. I think it all came from the Vallejo job. A lot of it was due to Orvin Gaston and Wyman Riley, who were my two mentors on the paper, and also the photographers themselves who'd say, "Gee, I don't like that picture." They're the ones who would advise me on cropping the pictures and focusing on the faces.

One more very tiny tidbit on the emphasis on the women's section. Senator Gibson was so tremendously proud of the fact that his men friends would comment, "Oh, I saw So-and-So in Marion's section on Sunday. That was an interesting story or an interesting column." One thing that he was just so proud of, one Sunday morning--he and his family were Presbyterians--at the Presbyterian church, Reverend [Lester] Eisel, who was the pastor, made some comment on the fact that the attendance was small. He said, "I suppose everyone is at home reading Marion Devlin's society section." Well, he couldn't wait until Monday morning to tell me that. "You made the Presbyterian church yesterday, staunch Catholic that you are."

Also, when he built the new building that was our printing plant--we used to have our office uptown, but the plant was downtown--the only two private offices that adjoined the newsroom were Wyman Riley's and mine. He called in Vallejo's top interior decorator, wanted her to do my office so it would be a meeting place for the women who came in with their stories.

She and I went down to San Francisco. We went to Jackson Square. We picked out this fabulous desk, chairs, a credenza, wall ornaments, grasscloth for the walls, wall-to-wall carpeting. And I would keep saying, "Jeannette, this is costing too much." But no, he wanted it to be a drop-in place for when the women were downtown.

Riess: That's extraordinary.

Devlin: I don't think any other publisher has ever felt that way about wanting it to be a drop in place for the club women and the lodge ladies, "lodge and large."

Riess: Lodge and large? [laughter]

Devlin: Yes. That's a cliche that we coined. There I go. I'm talking again. Getting off the subject.

Riess: You say that it was unusual that the photographers were so wed to working with you. Is it because it would ordinarily seem that this was trivial, going out and shooting pictures of club meetings?

Devlin: Bridal showers. I think once we won our first prize--and they were, of course, given due credit in the story, everybody who contributed--they took almost as much of an interest in that section. They found that my two assistants and I were easy to work with, and weren't second-guessing them on things. I just couldn't have asked for more supportive photographers. They're great. Still are.

CNPA Top Award

Riess: Let's talk more about your prize-winning pages. You got the prize for ten years?

Devlin: Yes, but they weren't consecutive years.

Riess: Tell me more about that process of submitting, when you did it first and why.

Devlin: Well, we won the first time--

Riess: Wasn't it 1948?

Devlin: Yes. Wyman Riley was a great believer in these competitions. My two assistants and I would go through the year's sections and pick out the three that we liked the best, and three were submitted.

One thing I did want to emphasize. You mention in your letter the fact that big newspapers, apparently, weren't among the winners. Well, we were judged in our circulation group. In other words, I wouldn't be competing with the great big circulation papers. There were a lot that were much bigger than ours, and with whom we were competing, but it was divided into circulation groups.

Riess: And it would be metropolitan dailies, suburban dailies or whatever, and you were a suburban daily.

Devlin: Right.

We would submit three. The sports editor would pick out his three that he liked the best. I would pick out the three that we liked the best. And Wyman would pick the editorials and the various things, and they were sent in. We won--.

I wish I could remember the years. That's another cause for grievance. When my office was remodeled, the Senator had a special shelf made. At that point I think I had won three. He said, "Oh, you'll need more. You'll need more." I wanted him to put them in his office because he had the others for the other departments.

Riess: The prize-winning papers, or the trophies?

Devlin: No, the trophies. Oh, great big things.

When the strike was imminent, Jimmie Jones, who is now the general manager, was kind enough--he saw me packing up my stuff and he said, "Do you want me to help you to pack the trophies?" I said, "No, I want those to go to Senator Gibson." Well, they didn't.

Then, after, when we were out on strike, I decided I would rather have them at home then to have them at the Times-Herald, where they are now on display as though they were earned by their

staff. I called Jimmie and said that, with his permission, I would like them packed and I would like to get them. He said, "Well, of course, I can't do that without checking with Dave Caffoe," who was then in charge. He phoned back and said, "I'm sorry but they said, 'No. Those were won for the newspaper.'"

Riess: Yes.

You are saying that when you entered the California Newspaper Publishers Association contest, the whole newspaper would submit?

Devlin: Yes. Sports, editorial--.

Riess: And every year that they would do this?

Devlin: Yes.

One year we were extremely proud, we won the one for general excellence. I know sports won a couple of times, but not the first place. They would get like second or third. Then, of course, they would go into the Associated Press and some of the other contests. But mine only went into CNPA because--I don't know--it was whatever Wyman thought they should do.

Riess: In a way, probably the metropolitan papers weren't really competitive with your women's sections, because they didn't cover club and social news.

Devlin: Even then. And now, of course, every year there's a little story --I take the Chronicle--on the CNPA winners, because they will have won something in photography or something of the sort. And I have never seen either the Examiner or Chronicle winning anything in women's news coverage.

Riess: When did the Examiner and Chronicle stop covering women's news?

Devlin: I don't remember. I really don't.

Riess: Weddings used to be such an important part of the Sunday New York Times, for instance. That's such a change.

Devlin: What I've heard about the Sacramento Bee and the Washington Post, you pay to get a little story in. It's a minimal amount. If you want a photograph with it, it's a mug shot of the bride only, and that I think is $5 extra. But you never see a wedding. Oh, I suppose if Gordon Getty's daughter got married, but no, I have not seen a wedding story.

You'll find an engagement mentioned, or "So-and-So attended the wedding of This-and-That," in the column at the top of the page, Pat Steger's column [in the San Francisco Chronicle]. But mainly they have just dropped it entirely.

Riess: Do you think it is because weddings now are less "until death do us part?"

Devlin: I never thought of that.

We also ran--boy they loved it here in Vallejo!--we would run a bridal shower. Some brides would have four and five showers, and we would run only one bridal shower before a wedding, but they were big events. They were often held up at the country club or at the hotel, and of course, a lot at home.

We didn't run baby showers, although we would run a little story on it if they wanted. But bridal showers we did. We, more or less, made our own rules. I never made them on my own. The three of us, the other two in my department and I, would say, "Well, we thought this or that." I always consulted Wyman, and while Orvin was still taking an interest--.

In fact, Orvin Gaston's daughter was one of my prize assistants. She worked for me and also worked on the strike newspaper. The two who had worked with me on the Times-Herald and I all moved to the strike newspaper and worked together there.

Riess: I think next time we will talk about that whole strike story. The injustice of not being able to get back in to retrieve your old stuff!

Devlin: I watched the Mary Tyler Moore program this week, and I found my eyes filling with tears at the final deal where she and the whole staff walked out of the office, because I know that feeling. I was crying when I walked out. I couldn't have stopped.

Riess: Oh, dear.

Devlin: But it was the end of an era.

Riess: About the California Newspaper Publisher's Association, was there a women's page editors group, and did you get together and talk? In other words, was there a system for networking among women's page editors?

Devlin: No. We had, for a time, a little Napa-Solano Press Club, men and women. Of course, at those things we women would always get together. Really, there were so few papers involved, the Benicia,

Napa, Fairfield, Vacaville. We all knew each other, and liked each other, but otherwise we never contacted each other.

Riess: Why?

Devlin: Just because we are all were so busy here, and our interests were different. Our section was bigger and better than any of those in this area. There was a different emphasis on social news. In Vallejo there was tremendous emphasis on the navy society. In Fairfield and Suisun, when Travis air base was established, that was their focus of interest. In Napa it was on the old-time wealthy Napa society. So each of us had, more or less, a different focus.

Riess: It's funny that I didn't pick up that your women's section prize was in the group of suburban papers. It just doesn't come across at all.

Devlin: I'm not absolutely sure I'm right on that, Suzanne. I could be wrong.[5] I remember somebody said, "Oh, the Santa Barbara is a good paper. They have a wonderful women's section." Occasionally I'd hear, "Well, So-and-So has a great section." I think the massive size of ours may have overwhelmed them.

Senator Gibson sent me down, I remember, two or three times to accept the award in person. Once he sent me to Coronado, once to Palm Springs, once to Sacramento. He sent me every time, and I can remember that the other women's editors who were there were just aghast at the space that we had, and at the coverage we had.

After Donrey took over the paper, I won the first year, until they started slashing things, but I wasn't invited to go pick up the award then. The general manager went down. But Senator Gibson not only provided the trip, and the hotel, and everything of the sort, but also when I went to Palm Springs he sent my sister along so that she could bask in reflected glory as the navy news editor. He was so proud of that women's section. It was great.

Riess: The second place in 1948 was won by the Sacramento Union. Was that not a big paper?

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[5] I was talking to Jack Dailey. He said he thinks I was definitely wrong on judging the CNPA, that it was a general judging. I don't know where I got that other idea, but I had it in mind. That may have been some other contest. [Marion Devlin, Feb. 26, 1991 interview]

Devlin: You're right. I must be wrong on that, because that was a big paper. I don't remember what kind of a section they had, because I didn't read it regularly. Yes, you're right.

Riess: So you went up against them all! In 1948 there were three hundred entries. In 1951 the Sunday Panorama won over ninety other papers. Did you also submit the weekday social pages?

Devlin: When we were getting out a daily page in the Evening Chronicle, and in the Times-Herald, which were two separate newspapers although joint subscription, I think we entered the Chronicle too, figuring that we wouldn't stand much of a chance. The Sunday Panoramas were the ones that we felt that we would stand a good chance on.

Riess: Well, they were massive.

Devlin: They really were. I wish I had kept more of them. That one I gave you was the only one I had on hand. I had kept that because I thought that the grandnieces and nephews would like the column I wrote on my grandmother coming over from Ireland.

Riess: Are you saying there is no library of the old papers?

Devlin: If there is, I wouldn't know. I do know this--I'll follow through on this when I'm at the museum today--when Donrey built their new building, they had all these old file copies, hundreds, thousands of them I guess, they didn't have room for them, and they offered them to the museum. They asked the museum if they would like them, and they said, yes, they certainly would, but they would have to find a place to store them. Now, what ever happened after that I don't know.

I think the library does have them on microfilm, but I have never bothered to go down. I went down to get some other material for something I was writing for the V.I.P., and of course, microfilm is so tough on the eyes and tough on bifocals too.

I just didn't keep them. You don't at the time. You think, "Well, if I want a copy I'll go back and get last month's." So, aside from the few columns that I wrote about family members that I thought might be of interest to the children, and I wrote one on the Chinese cook because he made good reading material--I have copies of those for my niece and my three nephews--I just don't think I have any others.

Riess: Why don't you find out what happened to the hard copy?

Devlin: [answered later] That wasn't kept after publication. Inadequate storage space.

Riess: The trophy that came to you was donated by Script Magazine. I've never heard of Script Magazine. Is that a professional trade publication?

Devlin: I think it is. I have a picture of me receiving it. Maybe you can see that [information] on it. I think that was in Sacramento. I'm not sure. I remember Script was a trade journal of some sort. Originally it was a huge trophy about like that [motions with hands]. Then they established a policy, which was much more sensible, of giving plaques, because there was wall space for them. So I think I had about three trophies, and the rest were plaques.

Riess: The trophy is wonderful. It's like a big baby in your arms.

Devlin: Oh, yes. I was clutching that. [laughter]

Cultural Coverage

Devlin: We had an excellent art page, a half page of art by Betty Polley. She was so good that when Miriam Cross of the Oakland Tribune was on vacation, Betty Polley filled in as art editor at the Oakland Tribune. She now does photographic work for Kodak on assignment.

We had an excellent music editor, Louise Johnson, who had been involved in the music of the community for years. She got out a half page on Sunday. So art and music, which have never been offered to the newspaper readers before, were given good coverage.

Mare Island couldn't get over the fact we had a representative from the enlisted men's wives, from the warrant officers, and then, of course, the officers' wives club. My sister, who was married to a retired navy captain, got out that page. She got out a whopping page, pictures--. We tried to play fair, that each of the different groups--. But of course there was emphasis on the officers' wives, because they did more socially. But the others got equal coverage.

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Riess: About art and music, it seems to me that you have an opportunity, by doing reviews and background pieces, to give people who might not have had a vocabulary to talk about art and music, give them some way of looking at stuff and knowing how to speak about it.

Devlin: That's right.

Riess: So you could have a real educational mission.

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: Did you think of it that way?

Devlin: No. I'm sure I didn't. I did know that whatever we were doing was pleasing people. Louise Johnson, our music editor, reviewed the symphony and the choral society and those events which had not had adequate coverage in the past.

Riess: A critical review ever?

Devlin: Oh, yes. She was a very honest reviewer. Sometimes she would ruffle a few feathers, but she knew what she was writing about. She did a beautiful job.

The Vallejo Music Association brought in people like the Trapp Family Singers, when they were just beginning. As a matter of fact, I went over and did the story on the Trapp Family because they were just getting into interest. But we had some very interesting celebrities here.

I don't know, people seemed to like the fact that we were reviewing things and pointing out things. Of course, if there was an art show of any sort here in Vallejo, there would be photographic coverage too.

Riess: What sort of art shows might there be, and where would they be?

Devlin: We had an artists--I'm trying to think of the name of the association--group. For a time they took over an old Vallejo home which they called the Vallejo Mansion Gallery. We would have a show, say, for several weeks. Most of them area artists.

Our sports editor, Dave Beronio, does fabulous black and white sketches. In fact, his sketches were the ones in the, I think, Forty-Niners and the Giants' programs for several years. He's well known in the Bay Area. We had an exhibit of his work. But things of that sort, primarily local artists.

Riess: If somebody took issue with a review, would you get letters?

Devlin: I don't remember offhand any that were particularly unhappy or antagonistic. We would often get letters thanking us for the good reviews. Then, after Louise Johnson couldn't keep up with them--she was involved in a lot of other musical activities--we had another person who just did the symphony concerts. Her reviews were excellent and were seemingly very, very well received.

Riess: How were these people paid? Just some minimum per word?

Devlin: As I recall, and I may be totally wrong, but I think Louise Johnson, the music editor, that was just considered part of her job. She liked doing the reviews. She may have been paid extra. I don't remember that, and that would have been something that she and Wyman would have worked out.

Riess: But as music editor?

Devlin: Oh, they were paid a flat weekly salary for that, because they got out a weekly page, and anything else that they wanted to get in during the week. Naturally, she might be plugging some particular musical group, and she would write a couple of promotional stories during the week. Yes. They were paid a flat rate. It wasn't very big. As I remember, it began as something like $25 a week. I'm trying to think what my sister got. I think she got $25 a week.

Then we had a Travis correspondent who did all the Travis news. She arranged for pictures up there and we paid so much per picture. But I'm sure in time that $25 must have gone up, but I don't remember.

Riess: And Chabot Terrace and Carquinez?

Devlin: Yes. The same way. I had nothing to do with the salaries there. That was handled with Wyman.

Riess: Did you have someone who was your secretary?

Devlin: No. Anything secretarial, I did my own.

Food Trends

Riess: Did parties change over the years? When you look back at issues of Sunset Magazine, for instance, you see all sorts of trends.

Devlin: Yes, patio picnics and Southwestern cooking and things.

Riess: How do these trends come about?

Devlin: I remember the two types of food pages that everybody wanted and everybody loved. There was a tremendous era when the big social parties were all cocktail parties. They wanted cocktail recipes, canapes, hors d'oeuvres, hot and cold dips. Dips, my Lord, when they came in you would think it was the Renaissance, you know. It was just fantastic.

Then the other one--. Vallejo in those years was a great place for bridge parties, ladies bridge parties or dessert bridges. And fancy new desserts, like the frozen desserts, if we would have a page of those on Sunday, they would be in on Monday for extra tear sheets, which we gave away for free. (So many pages were torn up for the advertisers that we had all these extras.) We could tell what was popular. The librarian who handled the tear sheets would come in and say, "That food page of yours yesterday, I've had more requests for it." I would look, and sure enough it would either be on cocktail food, or dessert food, or ladies' luncheon food.

Then the church women loved things like sandwich loaves and things that they could fix ahead.

Riess: What is a sandwich loaf, for our readers who may not have any idea?

Devlin: I should have made one. Maybe I'll get one together next week. You would get a long loaf of pullman bread. The bakery would slice off the crusts for you and cut it in three slices. Then you would put in two fancy kinds of filling. Whatever you like. Maybe a chicken salad or tangy cheese and egg filling. Then you would frost the whole thing with a mixture of cream cheese and seasonings. If you were real fancy, which I never was, you would decorate it with little flowers and vegetables and things. Then you would slice it off and serve that maybe with--oh, I don't know what else--some relishes to begin your bridge playing with.

Riess: And you would eat it with a knife and fork?

Devlin: Eat it with a fork. Oh my word, sandwich loaves. You have led a sheltered life, haven't you? [laughter] Those went on for years. I can't tell you how many of them I've fixed.

Then, if men were in the group at my apartment, my other specialty was an oyster loaf. I did a beautiful oyster loaf. Frequently they would come up there for something after we got out

a paper. Not just men necessarily, but the staff was so heavily men. Aside from my two women, and one other woman reporter for a time who didn't mingle much with the rest of us, that was it.

I could see the trends in food. I'm sure if I were getting out the pages today it would be Southwestern heavily, which doesn't appeal to me in the least.

Riess: Tell us about an oyster loaf.

Devlin: Oh, an oyster loaf! I used to hear my parents talk about an oyster loaf. That was a big thing in the early days here in California. So I found a recipe once and made it and found it was very easy. You got a round loaf of French bread with the heavy crust. Cut off the top slice and scoop out most of the innards. Spread the cut side of the top and the inside of the thing with butter.

Then you got your oysters. Fried them. Seasoned them. Not too big oysters. Filled the loaf. Put the top on. Wrapped the whole thing in heavy foil and baked it until the bread and oysters were piping hot, and then served it in chunks. It was a messy thing to eat.

Riess: Is this pick-up food, or is this knife and fork food?

Devlin: Presumably pick-up, although you served it with a knife and fork. The popular drink with that was always beer, which I can't stand. My parents used to talk about their bridge club, which met at night. This was when we were living in Vallejo, so it was way back. An oyster loaf and beer was the big thing. So I learned how, and none of my friends had made it. When I introduced it to the newspaper bunch, they loved it.

Riess: It's very gutsy food.

Devlin: Yes, it is, and you have to like oysters, which I do. But, I haven't made one of those for years.

I never had liked cooking, in spite of my oyster loaf and sandwich loaf speeches. I never had cooked at home, and I'm just hopeless in the kitchen, but I read the food pages of the San Francisco Chronicle every week. Occasionally I clip a recipe, which I know I'm never going to try, but I like to read them. I think that women go for those, and the food sections.

The women's magazines have always given an awful lot of space to food. I think that the women get their ideas from those. So we tried to keep up with them. And as the trends would develop,

they would come into me. It wasn't my thinking; you can't imagine the wonderful layouts that would come from the egg and poultry people, and the various companies, often with free samples, not of eggs and chicken, but kitchen gadgets, things of the sort. As I say, make-up has been my fondest part of the paper. I would love to make-up really good-looking food pages. And their photos reproduced so beautifully.

Riess: These are mats?

Devlin: No, we didn't use mats. These were the actual glossy photos, and we got terrific reproduction. We stopped using mats way, way back. That was a dirty word on the newspaper. We used photos for everything. The little black and white sketches for fashions we used, but otherwise they would send glossies almost entirely.

Riess: Well, those food sections are pretty much driven by advertisers.

Devlin: Yes.

Mr. Gibson's notion, which I'm sure most publishers do not share, is that--I may have said this before to you on one of my long-winded jags--the woman in the household represents the buying power. Consequently, advertising in the woman's section makes sense. He inculcated that idea with our advertising men, and it did sell advertising, I'm sure. We would frequently have a good-looking automobile ad in the women's section. I think he showed marvelous judgement in that. It's something that doesn't continue.

Riess: Before we leave the subject of food, you told me a funny story after our last interview about how little you used your kitchen to cook, and about some fellows from the paper coming over to use your apartment.

Devlin: Yes. They used to come up there because everybody else had wives or families or husbands, and my apartment was centrally located.[6] So our AP man, Bud Young, picked up the key to the apartment to go up ahead and get the food going. He had been there before, but I guess he had never been in the kitchen, and he called me about a half an hour later.

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[6]I'd better clarify that part about the men coming up to my apartment. A few times during World War II they gave all-men parties for our staff members who were going into the service. They knew I went to Berkeley weekends, and other nights too, and they asked to use my apartment, which was centrally located. The others had wives who might not care to have the place disrupted by a stag party. [M. Devlin]

"Marion, don't you have a stove?" I said, "Of course I have a stove." "Well, where do you keep it?" "Where else but the kitchen?" "Well, I can't find it." I said, "Bud, just lift the slipcover and it's underneath." [laughter] I used to sew in those days. I had made a slipcover of oilcloth. It was very pretty, and it just fitted right over it, and when you wanted to use the stove it wasn't that much effort to take it off. The stove was old and disheveled, and I thought it was tidy. It made it look nice!

Riess: Well, I tell you, it wouldn't do anything for your reputation as a food editor.

Devlin: I know it, and yet I've had more people say, "I used your wonderful recipe for so-and-so." I would say, "Oh, did you have that at my house?" "No, but I got it out of your food page." I got out good food pages. Of course, as I say, both my sisters were great cooks. They would say, "That recipe is so good." I just had never been very handy in the kitchen.

Riess: I think you told me your mother didn't know how to operate a can opener.

Devlin: Yes. Yes. And she was afraid to work the toaster.

She was the second oldest in her family, and she went away to college. Then she came back and taught, but she lived at home. Her mother and sisters were all good cooks. From the time she married, she never cooked. Help was easy to get in those days.

Riess: It sounds like your father discouraged her cooking, too.

Devlin: Yes. He didn't want her to do it. I think he felt we were getting much better cooking with a professional here. [laughter]

You know, the fabulous old Chinese cooks never even took days off. Our Lum Chow didn't. He would take part of Chinese New Years, but he wouldn't leave. He was there Sunday, every day of the week.

Beyond Women's Pages: Broadcasting

Riess: Why do you think the woman reporter you mentioned did not mingle?

Devlin: She worked in San Francisco after she left Vallejo. You may have known her. I don't want her name in, but she was a very competent newswoman. She came from Oklahoma. She came out here because her husband, who had been a Napa resident, was overseas, and she thought she would be here to welcome him home. She came to work on the Chronicle while I was city editor. This was during World War II.

I think it rankled her that she was working for a woman editor, for one thing. And I think that she thought that our paper was kind of cornball, with all the emphasis on women's news and local news. But she was extremely competent. She was a very, very good reporter. She never worked in my department. She wouldn't have. She told me she never wanted to work in women's news. She started to work in the newsroom, as I say, during the period when I was editor. She made the men look sorry by--.

Of course, we had lost our good men by then; most of them were overseas. We had two or three who were former newsmen who were stationed at Mare Island. Two enlisted men, one of them remained as our very beloved and very good city editor, Red Buehrer. He has since died.

But I always admired her ability. She and I have been friendly, but never real friends. As I say, she always demeaned the women's news and told me she would never work in that department. I really wouldn't have wanted her. It would have been wasting her talent. She was a good writer.

Riess: During the war period you were city editor of the Chronicle?

Devlin: Yes. Not by any means on a permanent basis. I wouldn't have taken it. It was too nerve-racking.

There were two periods there when we were without a city editor. Wyman Riley was in the Aleutians and they just were without anybody. Over my protests, Mr. Gibson and Orvin Gaston persuaded me to do it. But it was a hideously nerve-racking job.

I've quoted so often the fact that I would make up my page one using the lead story from the European theater if that was the hot story of the day, take it out to the composing room, and it would be half made up when there would be a block-busting story from the Pacific front and I would have to remake page one. The composing room was unhappy.

And in the middle of that, at 12:00 noon every day, I had to go up to the recording studio at the Casa de Vallejo and do a fifteen-minute broadcast. It nearly drove me crazy.

Riess: You mentioned that. Was it part of the job, or was this just a wartime extra?

Devlin: No. Senator Gibson was co-owner of KSRO. It was owned by the Santa Rosa publisher and Senator Gibson. Originally, it had been a Saturday afternoon broadcast with Wyman Riley, the sports editor Dave Beronio giving sports news, and with me giving the women's news. That was kind of fun. You had a week to think about it.

He [Luther Gibson] wanted a news broadcast coming from Vallejo every day at noon. There were no men left who would do it. I had had some experience through the Saturday program. So I would have to get up to the Casa to the broadcasting studio for a fifteen-minute broadcast. It was driving me crazy, but it paid well. My sponsors were the City of Paris, which had a Vallejo store then, and Jackson's Furniture Company. The radio station was happy to have such good advertisers.

Riess: Your broadcast would be breaking news? That was the idea?

Devlin: Breaking news and wire news. Wire news primarily, and if there was something really good in local news, but that would be it. It was all straight news. I got awfully tired of it, but the experience and the pay were good.

Riess: It sounds very stressful.

Devlin: Particularly that deal with the Pacific front and the European front, making up page one. And I had to learn the new count for the heads, the banner count. It was learning a totally new language to me.

Riess: In a situation like that the composing room people are right there with you to help you remake the page?

Devlin: Yes. That's right. Except I would have to say, "Well, I have to do the broadcast at twelve."

And for the afternoon paper we went to press at 1:30. It was a rush.

Riess: So you would rush away and they would be left to improvise or something?

Devlin: Well, I'd give them a pretty detailed dummy before I would leave. They were--. I sound like Pollyanna, but I never saw such great people to work with. There were about three make-up men in the composing room that I would have trusted to make up everything, my

whole Sunday section. I had two men on my Sunday section. They would say, "Are you sure you want to do this?" They were always right. I just can't say enough for that composing room bunch.

National Coverage, Regional Papers

Riess: I guess you had to make the assumption that your readers were relying on your paper for all the news?

Devlin: Yes.

Riess: You can't make the assumption that people are also going to be reading the Sacramento Bee, or a San Francisco paper?

Devlin: No. Vallejo has always been a blue-collar town. Very few people, except the very prosperous and those who really wanted to be informed, would take a San Francisco paper. There were some Tribune, some Sacramento Bee, subscribers, but not that many. We wanted to give them everything, so they wouldn't have to take an afternoon paper. We did try to cover everything we could.

Riess: That was the policy all the years you were with the paper? Towards the '60s, '70s, did you begin to feel that there was not that drive to be the complete newspaper?

Devlin: No. We never felt that there was an easing off. It was always, keep the other papers out of town. Give them full coverage. That's what we really aimed for. We did keep out the competition, as far as any new newspapers coming in.

Of course, meanwhile, Senator Gibson, years back, had bought the Benicia newspaper. He gave that to his daughter, and they still own it. Then, he bought the Martinez newspaper. For a time, Wyman Riley went over to the Martinez newspaper maybe two or three times a week. I went over one afternoon a week, because they wanted the women's section over there to copy ours as much as possible, of course on a much smaller scale. They didn't have the room. The advertising kept my section going.

Riess: The Martinez paper would take care of all the news? The Martinez people would not have to also read the Vallejo Times-Herald?

Devlin: Well, there was also the Contra Costa Gazette. The Martinez people wanted--. Of course, that's the courthouse over there, the city seat. I would go over, and I would occasionally have lunch with Frank Wooten, who was covering the courthouse for the Oakland

Tribune. Jim Ritch, who had been the other city editor when I first came up here, was living there. There was quite a little group who would get together for lunch, always at Amato's or whatever is the old-time place. I looked forward, I enjoyed those Thursday sessions. There was a very nice woman's page editor--I cannot used the word "society editor" I never could--she and I became good friends and she did a very, very good job.

Riess: Now, she was on the Martinez paper?

Devlin: Yes, on the Martinez paper.

Riess: But were you beginning to feel the encroachment of the Contra Costa paper?

Devlin: No, we really weren't. No. We never felt that, as long as Gibson owned the papers. He kept us on our toes. He was willing to spend money. He bought the most expensive comics. He bought the most expensive features. Of course, we had Associated Press, United Press, and INS, when all three were available. Sports columnists, we had Hal Boyle and Bob Considine. The very best columns ran in our paper.

Riess: I was reading Rivers and Rubin[7] yesterday, and they were saying that one of the things that the big papers can do is make contract agreements with the syndicated comic strips so that small papers can't get them.

Devlin: Yes, there were some that we could not get, and we grieved over that. I've forgotten what they were, because I've never been a comic reader, but I know there were a couple he was just wild to get and couldn't. Seems to me Li'l Abner was one of them. That's not even in existence now, is it?

Riess: I don't know.

Social Groups, "Fun" Groups

Riess: Last time we talked we agreed about the remarkable number of social organizations there are in Vallejo. Just to satisfy my curiosity, who were the Raz Ma Taz Cootiettes?

Devlin: Oh, Lord.

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[7]William L. Rivers and David M. Rubin, op cit.

Riess: What is a town that has things like Raz Ma Taz Cootiettes?

Devlin: The kind of a town that has a two-month-old baby attending the parents' wedding. [laughter]

The Raz Ma Taz Cootiettes were "the fun group of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary." How I remember that, I'll never know. We had the VFW, which was quite a strong organization here, and the VFW Auxiliary. Then the Raz Ma Taz Cootiettes, of course, coming from the cooties of World War I.

Riess: Now, what are the cooties of World War I?

Devlin: Well, during World War I I understand, and I've read enough about it, one of the things that plagued our men the most in Europe was the cooties.

Riess: You mean lice?

Devlin: Lice, but they were called cooties.

Riess: I remember "cootie catchers," pieces of folded paper to "catch" cooties. A joke.

Devlin: Yes. Exactly. Well, those were the cooties. I think the VFW, the men, had a Cooties group, which was, again, the fun group. They would have these costume nights and things of the sort. Then, the auxiliary decided they would have the Cootiettes. Where they got the Raz Ma Taz, I guess, just somebody was extra smart that night. [laughter] Yes, the Raz Ma Taz Cootiettes, and I haven't thought of them for years.

Riess: Over the years was the women's section moving away from women to people? Did you become self-conscious at any point about using women so much?

Devlin: Yes, but I can't say that we moved that much. Except that a lot of our social--I'm thinking primarily of the navy and Travis--pages would be officers and their wives. Of course, on the club installations, the Eastern Star installations, we handled the women's groups.

The men's group of the Masonic order, those definitely went in the news section. I think that I would have had a hard time getting them in mine if I would have wanted to. Orvin Gaston, and Mr. Gibson, and Wyman felt that there should be a definite break there, and that the women's news should be primarily women's. The

men's lodges always appeared in the news section. Any honors that any men would earn or win definitely went in straight news.

Riess: Was this ever an arguing point for you?

Devlin: No. I was usually so crowded on space that I didn't want to get anything else in. I can see what you mean, and if I were there today, I think I would do a little arguing maybe. In those days I didn't argue. I did what they said, and I guess that's why I held my job. [laughter]

Riess: When I noted the Raz Ma Taz Cootiettes, I also noted the remarkably named Minnehaha Council I Degree of Pocahontas, Wenonah Club. Hard to write a small newspaper item about a group that has such a large name!

Devlin: Well, the Red Men were for many years, maybe they still are, a very important lodge in Vallejo. I don't know if you would have Red Men where you were growing up, but the Independent Order of Red Men was a big, big organization. I think every man mayor we ever had belonged to it. I remember my father said that everybody running for political office became a Red Man out of--felt it was necessary.

So then, there were two councils for the wives, Minnehaha Council number 1 and Ioka number 30. Then, I don't know why, but these lodges, it was just that the thing, you either formed a fun group like the Cootiettes, or the Wenonah Club, which was for the past Pocahontases. Those were the top officers. That would be a fund-raising club or a sewing club or something of the sort. As I said, every lodge had a couple of satellites. Weird. It gave us an awful lot of material.

Riess: What are Red Men? How do they relate to American Indians?

Devlin: I couldn't tell you. But that's always been one of the big lodges. The Moose is a huge lodge in Vallejo, Loyal Order of Moose. The Fleet Reserve, of course, that's understandable in a navy town.

The Elks is our most prestigious lodge here. They have a beautiful, big clubhouse about three blocks from here where an awful lot of the social events take place. Vallejo has no big hotel now. We have a Holiday Inn, which is quite new. The Elks Lodge takes--well, for instance, tonight's dinner is going to be there. They have a good catering department, and they put on a lot of wedding receptions, many things of the sort.

Lodges play an awfully important part in Vallejo life.

Syndicated Columnists

Riess: Can you remember when you started running more features that had to deal with child rearing and family psychology? Up to a point in this country all mothers were presumed to know how to bring up their children. Then at some point it changed.

Devlin: Yes, and I used those. I was grateful for them many times when I had space available.

I did like using some of the good features, occasionally ones on hygiene and beauty. The women loved beauty columns. Of course I used those on the fashion page. A lot of good material came, a lot of things that I could use on the fashion page that would tie in.

Riess: Did you have columnists that you used, like a syndicated column by a child psychologist?

Devlin: No. We had one for a number of years on fashion. Mary Hampton wrote a syndicated column. She was very good, very down to earth. A good, sensible fashion column. There was one food columnist that I liked to use, but I can't remember the byline now. I think we had one on child psychology that ran, but I know it didn't run in my pages.

Riess: It didn't run in you pages?

Devlin: No.

Riess: That's interesting. Where would it have been?

Devlin: I'm trying to think. They had a feature page that ran opposite the editorial, and they ran some of those columns.

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Riess: Erma Bombeck

Devlin: Yes. When her column started we got that. It was very cheap in those days, I remember.

Ann Landers, I spent a day with Ann when she came here.

Riess: She came out to sell the column to the paper?

Devlin: No, Senator Gibson had already bought it. He paid for her to come. She spoke to a capacity audience in our Veterans Memorial Hall. They asked me to go down and meet her at the airport, and I brought her up and spent the day with her. Then she went up to my apartment to tidy up for the evening. She was sensational. I still hear from her occasionally. I think I hear from her at Christmas. But her column is still in the paper with the present ownership. She had an absolutely enormous following.

Riess: The San Francisco Chronicle expanded that area of its coverage, self-scrutiny, personality tests, sex advice, and all that. Is that just not the kind of thing that you would have here?

Devlin: Not while I was on the paper, and they certainly don't have anything like that now. They run Ann Landers, as I say, and Erma Bombeck, and that's their social page, their life style page. I did run-- . As I say, I nearly always had a beauty column on the fashion page Sunday. That was a very good column, and I can't remember whose. I don't remember if there were other columns, if we ran them on child rearing or child psychology. I know that must have gone in the news section.

Riess: That's interesting that they would go in the news section. Do you think that gives them more exposure or less?

Devlin: I felt less, because I know the paper conducted two or three surveys--also the V.I.P. did later, the strike paper--as to the most popular part of the paper, and the most popular column, and things like that. Well, I think the reason that we came out ahead nearly every time is that the women had more time to fill out the survey thing and mail it in.

After I was forced into writing a weekly column, a Sunday column, that would nearly always get top billing, and I was always embarrassed because my good friend Dave Beronio, the sports editor--and he and I are still good friends--would always get second. Of course, he made much of it and heckled me a lot. I was embarrassed really. I wish they hadn't had those surveys, but they did.

But as I say, I think that's typical. Women like to fill out those things, surveys, and I think the men think, "Oh, I'm going to," and don't get around to it.

Local Contributors, Qualifications

Riess: Let's talk about the sections and contributors. "Navy Notes," by Dory Clement.

Devlin: That was my sister.

Riess: "Books in Review," by Barbara Hunter.

Devlin: Yes, she wrote the reviews. If we needed fillers, she would pick up the "ten best" in the Bay Area, or something like that, but she usually wrote all her own book reviews.

At the time she was doing the books she was working as one of my assistants. I think one of them was on maternity leave. Barbara was working there when the paper was sold, and she went to the V.I.P. too.

Riess: "Dance, Music, Drama," Betty Minahen.

Devlin: Betty Minahen, yes. Well, now she filled in. She did those, but then Louise Johnson was actually our music page editor. Is she not mentioned there? [referring to list Riess holds] She may have been away. She and her husband went to Europe, I remember, one time.

Riess: Then from Travis, Fran Ashburg. "Your Garden" has no editor, so I take it that's just a column.

Devlin: It was a full garden page in the Sunday section, but it was--. I'm trying to think if that came in. I know I had nothing to do with it. Who did do the garden page? No, that was made up there, because we would run a picture of a local garden every Sunday.

I have a feeling that Charlotte Pruitt did that, but her name was not there, you said, for the garden? She was on the news staff. Her column would be localized as to what to do in your garden at this time of year. I knew it was a good page, I read it.

Riess: "Designs for Entertaining," what does that mean?

Devlin: That was food. Fancy talk.

Riess: "Sidewalk Reporter," tell me about that.

Devlin: That was a local deal. We had two or three people who did it. Everybody would get tired of it in time. They would go up to the entrance to Penney's, for instance, or down to one of the banks, and just stop people coming in and ask them a local question. And the photographer went along and shot these little mug shots. They were timely questions every week. People read them. We would get quite a bit of response to that.

Riess: The Chronicle still does it, religiously.

Devlin: Yes, I know it. Those are things that--.

The current Times-Herald has occasionally on Sunday a "What's Your Thinking?" but it's not in every week by any means.

Riess: I think it's a very smart idea. It doesn't take up much space, and it's like the lottery. It could be you or the guy next door.

Devlin: That's right. Was there a byline for the "Sidewalk Reporter?"

Riess: Yes, it was Barbara Hunter. And then the "Calendar Section." Those seem to be the big sections.

Devlin: I counted eight that you mentioned, and then my two full-time assistants, Mary Ann and Jan, and I, would make eleven. Barbara Hunter, I remember now very definitely, also did the garden page, and did a very good job on it, did the "Sidewalk Reporter," and also helped out in my department and on news.

Riess: Did any of the people under you come from journalism school backgrounds?

Devlin: No. Jan Gaston Stockstill, who was outstanding, had worked on the college paper at University of Pacific.

Her father [Orvin Gaston] was my first city editor, and then assistant publisher. I don't think he had ever worked on a newspaper. When he was at the University of Oklahoma was the first time ever, he said. There he was editor of the monthly magazine and the daily newspaper. He was a remarkable man.

Mary Ann Magnuson had worked on her college newspaper. She's the one whose mother had been my earlyday assistant.

Mildred Schroeder [later Mildred Hamilton], who worked for us for a time during the war before she went down to the San Francisco Examiner, had worked on an Oklahoma newspaper--I've forgotten where in Oklahoma. She was an experienced newswoman.

Barbara Hunter had worked on one of the San Francisco newspapers. I don't remember which. She had a newspaper background. Her father was a newspaper man. She was a very good writer. I can't think of anybody else who had had experience really.

Riess: Mildred Schroeder [Hamilton] had greater ambitions than Vallejo?

Devlin: Yes. She wrote like a professional. Well, so did Jan Gaston Stockstill. She was an excellent writer. Barbara was a very good writer, but rather unreliable at times. We're still friendly. She lives in Vacaville, but she is not doing anything.

The Coronation, the Royal Wedding, and Other Specials of the Day

Riess: You went to England in 1953 to cover Queen Elizabeth II's coronation? That was a plum!

Devlin: That was Orvin Gaston and Wyman Riley. They were always my two closest friends on the paper. They got the idea that it would be wonderful. I had been talking, you know, saying, "Oh, wouldn't I love to see that. Wouldn't I love to see it." Wyman said, "Well I bet I could get you press credentials."

"How could you?"

"Oh, I think we could." And Orvin said, "Of course we can. No problem."

I said, "Well, I'll pay my way if you'll get me press credentials." I talked my mother into going, and sure enough, I had press credentials. Flew over in the same plane with Herb Caen, Mrs. Fremont Older, the mayor--oh, what was his name, Elmer Robinson--and city council from San Francisco. The official delegation, they got me on that plane.

There was a big sendoff down at the airport, and the municipal band was down, and who was the striptease girl of that day? Tempest Storm. She was down, with a bunch of her girls. It was before Carol Doda, who's a Vallejo girl, by the way. They were there with a huge cake decorated for Herb Caen and trays of beautiful hors d'oeuvres. And when we got on the plane, Herb Caen passed the hors d'oeuvres and served them. He sat with Mrs. Fremont Older. She and my mother were obviously the two senior passengers aboard. It was a marvelous flight.

Riess: So this was a whole press plane?

Devlin: It was the official San Francisco plane. Both Wyman and Orvin had lots of good newspaper connections--my travel agent also, I'm sure, helped--but they got us on the official San Francisco plane. That's why the mayor, the city council--. There were other celebrities, but of course, Herb Caen was the top one.

We stopped overnight in New York and then in London.

Riess: Did you all stay in the same place? Was that part of the package?

Devlin: I'm trying to remember. No, because my mother and I were staying on in Europe. Ozzie Hilton, the travel agent, got us into a hotel in London. It was impossible at that point to get any hotel reservations. At first, the closest he could get us in was Windsor. Then, finally, he got us a very good one in London.

We all had tickets for the press section, which, of course, was not in the Abbey. The only press allowed there was from the various parts of the British Empire, and the wire services. We were in a section immediately outside the Abbey and could see the procession coming and going.

The best part of it all, I think, was the fabulous parties given beforehand. Oh, and the official California delegation included Governor Earl Warren and his wife and their three daughters. The British press gave a party for the American press, and all the Warrens were there. Fleur Cowles was one of the official delegation. Then the day before the coronation, I don't know who the women were--but as I say, friends of mine had connections--I was invited with maybe eight or ten other women to the fashion salon of Norman Hartnell, who had done the Queen's gown, and the Queen Mother's, and Princess Margaret's, and all the attendants. While we didn't see the gowns, we saw the sketches and swatches. It was fantastic.

There were some other parties. I've forgotten what. I did have friends in London.

Riess: Where you filing daily reports?

Devlin: I was filing daily reports and then--.

Riess: By telephone?

Devlin: Primarily by phone. Then they would, I must say, supplement them with some of the wire copy for things and names and double-checking. It was unbelievable.

Prior to that, another friend from Vallejo, a younger friend, the daughter of one of my father's law partners, went with my mother and me. We had driven through Ireland first. Then after the coronation we went up and drove through Scandinavia, and came back to Paris, and then home. It was great.

And then, to go over to the royal wedding in '81 was equally great. That time I had press credentials from the V.I.P., the little old strike newspaper. Again, with Wyman at the helm, he got me there. There were very, very, few--in fact, at the coronation I think there were only two other California women, because most of them were men, of course. So, I felt very lucky.

Riess: You would have some personal touch, and they would have the wire service story, and then would give it a definite byline?

Devlin: A Devlin byline, and a lead on something that had struck me in particular.

Riess: It was front page news?

Devlin: Yes, oh yes. And I haven't saved a single copy of that.

Riess: Not for your grandnieces. That's too bad.

Devlin: I don't know why. My mother--I still have some boxes and newspapers of hers in the garage. I must look through those. I never got around. She probably kept some of them. No, she couldn't. She wasn't here. She was with me.

Just this morning I was listening to Good Morning America. A new book has come out on Philip and Elizabeth which is apparently very derogatory.

Riess: Too bad. I've always thought that they were really quite fine.

Devlin: They said that he is a known womanizer. The woman who was the interviewer said, "And you said she had had an affair?" And he [the author] said, "No, I didn't say that. I didn't say that. I said that she used to go out on Monday nights with a veil and meet this man at some particular place, and they used to talk. And different waitresses would say, 'I'll bet people have told you look like Queen Elizabeth.' And she would say, 'Oh, no, she's much prettier.'" [chuckles] I think his name is Higham. I think he's the one we always referred to as the--. I'm not sure. I didn't realize it was coming on. I was listening to it while I was combing my hair and tidying up.

Riess: That's funny. Well, they probably are making a case for the poor state of Diana and Charles.

Devlin: He said, however, that there's no question of her abdicating early, that she is very satisfied that Diana and Charles will never separate or divorce. That's all that counts.

Riess: The book is an interview with him?

Devlin: No, no. He's the author of the book. He was being interviewed on Good Morning America, which I usually listen to when I'm getting dressed, from seven to nine.

I was amused at one of those newspapers I gave you where it said that I had interviewed Queen Elizabeth.[8] I thought, "Dear God, the British Consul will go up in smoke!" Because when Princess Margaret and her husband were at the Press Club, I was a member of the club, and I was invited to the press conference. So I called the British Consulate to find out what time the press conference was.

"Royalty does not hold press conferences," he said. "Royalty receives the press." Here the Times-Herald, in that awful story they ran after my eightieth birthday, said that I had interviewed Queen Elizabeth, I think twice. I had seen her, I think, three or maybe four times.

Riess: Your flight on the Constitution was another kind of amazing event in your life.

Devlin: That was fascinating, yes. I had made trips as the guest of the army, guest of the navy and guest of the air force.

Riess: Who initiated that?

Devlin: Wyman. He thought it would be good for the paper, and of course, the senator was overjoyed.

In every case I just--. I'm sure some of the men on the paper would have loved to do that, but I don't know why, the senator liked having me do things. He liked seeing my name there. It wasn't that my writing was that good, but he liked--. Well, as I say, he was so impressed that the Presbyterian minister mentioned my name.

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[8]See Appendices.

Riess: It sound like, from what you said earlier, he knew that you had readership across the board.

Devlin: He was in favor of any of those things.

Wyman knew the public affairs officer at Travis, and that was a very interesting flight. That's the one when I went on one of the air evacuation planes from Korea. It was really fascinating.

Riess: Where did you go on that flight?

Devlin: I boarded at Travis.

Riess: Then you went east?

Devlin: Then we went east.

The plane was set up with beds and litters for the evacuees. We went first to Westover, Massachusetts. Then the patients, or the amputees, were shipped to the service hospitals nearest their homes. I did a series of stories on Westover.

In Washington I went to Walter Reed and Bethesda Hospitals. I happened to know the commanding officer at Bethesda, who had married a Vallejo girl, and that helped a lot. Bethesda was famous for, more or less, the new skin transplants for the war wounded. Thanks to Admiral Wilcutt I was able to get quite a good story on that.

Riess: What was the local angle, if these boys were from back there?

Devlin: It was what Travis was doing, and the fact that the air evacuation planes were rather something new.

I went to Travis the day before for a press party. Louella Parsons was there, Pat O'Brien, Shirley Temple Black, oh, some other Hollywood celebrities. They went through the wards and visited. One of the pictures in my room there is of Louella Parsons and me with one of the patients.[9]

Oh, press parties were one of the bright spots! They were the dessert, to go to one of those. That air evacuation plane trip was terribly depressing but very, very rewarding.

Riess: I should think so. Did you do a story? A human interest story of the amputees?

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[9]Illustrated

Devlin: Yes, as much as they were willing to.

Riess: As who was willing to?

Devlin: The patients. I mean if they were willing to talk.

Riess: Where did those stories appear?

Devlin: Well, I typed them up each night. (I had kept my portable with me.) Then I brought them home, and they ran as a series here on page one.

Riess: I was wondering. You've talked about "News from Travis." But did the paper cover the darker sides of war? The hospitalized wounded?

Devlin: Primarily the medical advantages or services that were being given to the war wounded at Mare Island and Travis hospitals. That was the local angle. And then, of course, during World War II Mare Island was the amputee center for the Pacific amputees. They were famous for the brace shop at Mare Island, and making all of the various artificial limbs. Mare Island was the place where the Pacific amputees came. I did two or three stories on that.

Riess: A more upbeat story then?

Devlin: Yes, yes. It really was. With Walter Reed and Bethesda, they were offering fantastic advancements in medicine for the wounded.

Riess: I think we talked, but not on tape, about the rehabilitation center at Kaiser. Was it because of the number of injured veterans that Kaiser up in Vallejo became a rehab center?

Devlin: No, no connection. I heard--. Now this comes back to me--I hadn't thought of this in advance--Henry Kaiser's wife was an invalid. I don't know what her basic problem was. She had to have therapy. They became interested in this therapist who became a very good friend of mine, Margaret Knott. (I don't know where she was from, although, I could find out. I do have clips on her I believe.)

Henry Kaiser was so fascinated by what therapy accomplished for his wife that he decided to open this rehabilitation center, and put Maggy Knott in charge. She became world famous, and trainees from all over the world came here. She published a couple of books, too.

I did stories on her because we had become very friendly; she was president of the Soroptimist Club, and I had been. At one time she told me that applications for training there were backed up for six years. She set up that. He [Henry Kaiser] told her, "Anything she wanted" for that rehab center. I went through it with her several times. It just became world famous.

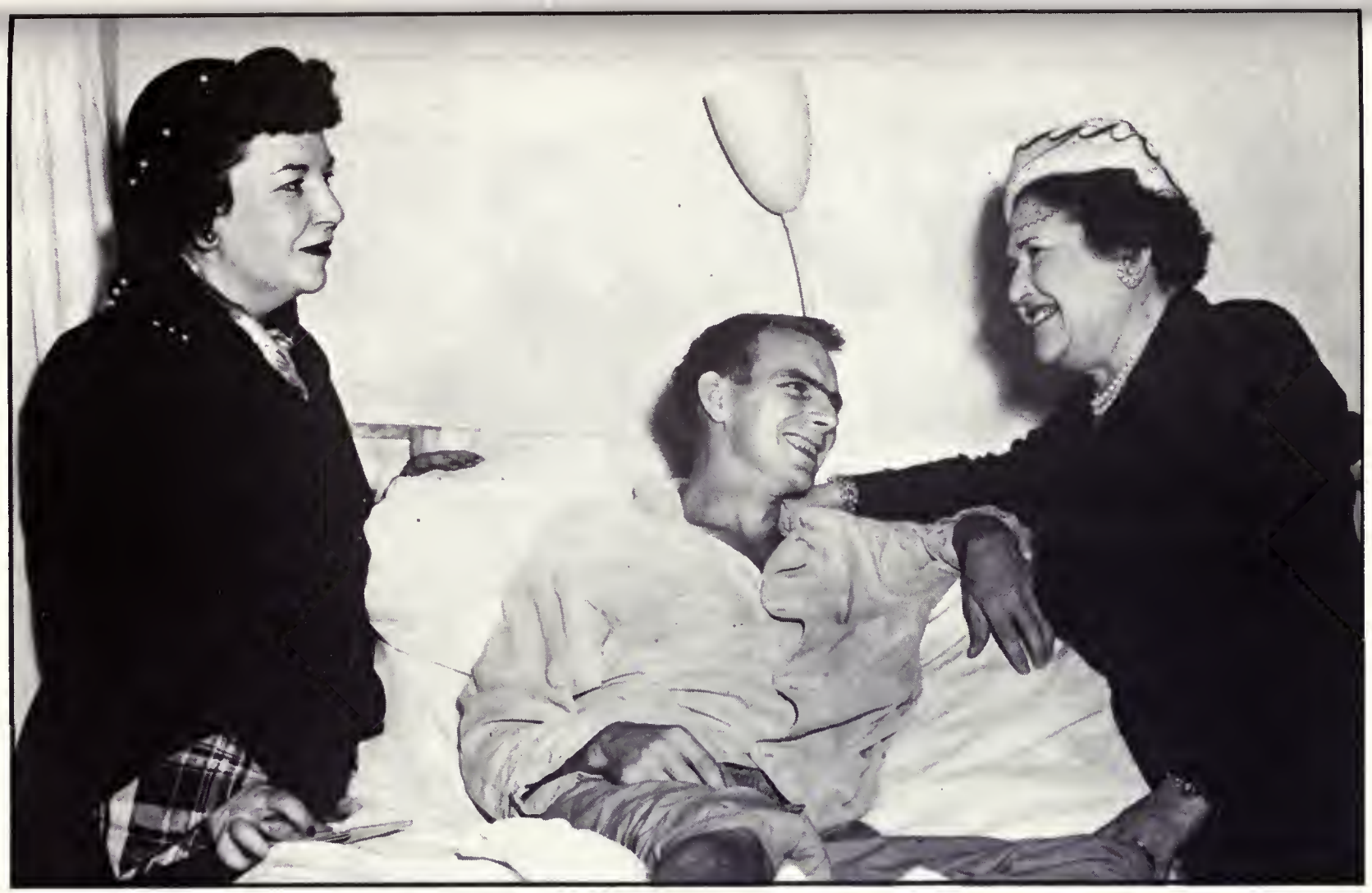
Riess: And they were her innovations?

Devlin: She developed this theory of, oh, it was about a twelve-syllable word that I had to learn to spell. It was used in the title of her book. She developed a theory of therapy that was completely revolutionary to what they had been doing all these years, to get motion back in limbs that were considered unusable. It proved that she was right. It became so famous that these trainees--. She always had quite a few trainees from Scandinavia, and from the Orient and from different places--they would stay here for six months, I think. I think that was the reason.

And it was all due to Henry Kaiser's wife's problem!

Farewell party for Marion Devlin before she left Vallejo to cover the coronation in 1953 of Queen Elizabeth II of England. The women had already given Marion a party to which the men weren't invited, so the men staged a 'stag' party for her and presented her with a press camera. "I was the only girl there, and I loved every minute of it."

Marion Devlin and Wyman Riley, "plugging the Mare Island Centennial in 1954."



Marion Devlin and Louella Parsons with one of the Korean War wounded. Soldiers were flown back from Korea to Travis Air Force Base for a brief stay, then sent on air evacuation planes to service hospitals nearest their homes. Marion Devlin did a series of articles on the program, and she was the only reporter invited to make the trip east with one plane-load. Parsons and Hollywood celebrities Shirley Temple, Pat O'Brien, and Margaret Whiting had flown to Travis to visit the wounded. They returned to Hollywood, and Miss Devlin boarded the plane for the trip to the East Coast. "I didn't expect to like her [Parsons], but I found her to be very friendly and warm, and the patients were obviously responsive to her folksy, informal manner." Circa 1952.

Marion Devlin with Aldo Ray, ". . . at the peak of his movie career. Aldo Ray was a Crockett boy who had loads of Vallejo friends and used to spend a lot of time in our office with his old friend Dave Beronio, sports editor." Wyman Riley, left, managing editor and later executive editor; Orvin Gaston, right, assistant publisher. Photographed in the 1950s.

Raymond Burr and Marion Devlin. "His mother, Minerva Burr Williams, was a well-known and popular Vallejoan. She played the organ and taught music. Her parents owned and operated a rooming house on Santa Clara Street. I first met Raymond when I went there to get a story, and he was serving as desk clerk. He was the handsomest young man, with melting dark eyes. He must have been about seventeen, just out of high school. He attended Vallejo schools and also a military academy in Marin County. I saw him infrequently through the years, but we always seemed to be friends. When he was trying to break into the entertainment world he told me I was the only person who had ever tried to help him with stories in our paper whenever there was a chance. Many years later, when he was at the top of his profession, a civic luncheon was given for him here and I was chosen to present the gift from the City of Vallejo to him."

V DONREY'S VALLEJO TIMES-HERALD; STRIKE

Vallejo Papers Sold to Donrey Group ##

Riess: We have come to an important story here, the strike, and what led up to it.

Was the fact that the News Chronicle was cut back to a Wednesday afternoon paper already the beginning?

Devlin: I wouldn't be surprised. I did not pay as much attention to the events leading up to the strike, because in my heart I was just certain there would never be one. Yet, I knew there was a very active group. From the time Donrey [Media Group] came in, I learned from men on the paper, Donrey made no bones about the fact that they wanted to get rid of the unions. There were five unions represented.

Riess: When did Donrey come in?

Devlin: I looked up that date, I thought, recently. I have it in mind that the paper was sold in '68, but I'm going to have to check on that. I'm terrible when it comes to years. I'm pretty good on names.

Riess: Why was the paper sold?

Devlin: Senator Gibson was getting along in years. He had had several very good offers to sell the paper. One, I understand, was far better than Donrey's. It was from Gannett. If Gannett would have come in, I think Vallejo would have been fortunate, compared to what they have now.

Senator Gibson had a very specific plan that he wanted. His only daughter was married and had three young children. (His son-in-law had worked on the paper and was a very bright young man. He's dead now.) I think Senator Gibson felt his daughter--that it would have been too much for her. She would have done a marvelous

job, just as I think Knowland's sister would have done a wonderful job at the Oakland Tribune. Nevertheless.

Whoever he [Gibson] sold it to had to accept his terms. He wanted it so that his wife would be guaranteed a certain amount every month or every year in payment, rather than payment in full, so that she would have no worries, no responsibility, no danger of the paper reverting back to the family. According to the stories that I learned, of course not from him, Don Reynolds jumped at it. "Yes, they would do it." They were the only ones who accepted his terms exactly.

Riess: Was there any consideration of selling it to the staff?

Devlin: None. That would have been such a logical thing. Why he never thought of it, or why if he thought of it he rejected it, I'll never know.

Riess: The strong people then still were Wyman Riley and Orvin Gaston?

Devlin: Yes. Orvin was the one that the old-timers knew better because he had been here more years. But Orvin, Wyman Riley, and I would certainly have gone in on it, and I think a lot of the others. If it was ever considered, we never knew it.

Riess: The staff was not privy to all of the thinking along the way?

Devlin: No. No. That about the Senator wanting his own terms was something that I learned from others.

Don Reynolds, or Donrey--

Riess: Please explain that name.

Devlin: Well, his name is Don Reynolds, the owner, and so he combined them to make it the Donrey chain. It's based in Arkansas. And he owns a big place at Lake Tahoe.

Riess: Was Reynolds on the scene often?

Devlin: No, not at all. He was in the office, I think, twice and I saw him walking by. He never bothered to meet any of the staff. He did come in the office a couple of times.

Riess: The paper was lucrative when he bought it?

Devlin: Oh, yes. It certainly was very, very lucrative, and it is today. Their inserts are fantastic, and of course those come preprinted. You don't have the printing costs and they are making money.

Riess: Did the Donrey chain get a radio or television station along with the newspaper?

Devlin: No. Senator Gibson had been co-owner of KSRO with the publisher in Santa Rosa for a number of years, but he had sold that already. So that was completely out.

Riess: Does Don Reynolds have any connections in Sacramento? Does he have political interests in California?

Devlin: No, none that I know of. His papers are scattered. I know he owns one in Reno. He owns a couple, I think, down the valley.

I wish Wyman Riley was here. He would know all the answers. As I say, they are based in Arkansas. He owns papers back in the Middle-West. I have seen a list of the Donrey papers, and they're quite numerous. He owns one in Aberdeen, Washington because that's where the first manager here went.

Riess: [referring to notes] February 18, 1970, the News Chronicle was cut back to a Wednesday paper.

Devlin: Well, I must be wrong on the late '60s, because I am sure that happened while Senator Gibson still owned it.

According to those pages that you had copied for me [from Rivers and Rubin], Wyman Riley gave as the reason [for cutting back publication to Wednesday only], that they were having such difficulties getting carriers. I know we were. Getting kids to carry two papers a day was awful.

Riess: When Senator Gibson sold the paper, had he been providing a kind of political and editorial direction up to that point?

Devlin: Oh, yes. Right up to the day he sold the paper.

Union Membership

Riess: When he sold the paper did the paper take an immediate shift in any direction?

Devlin: It wasn't noticeable.

I learned later--and I can sense it now to a certain degree --I was told that Don Reynolds, who's quite an old man himself now, is an ultra-conservative, and has always been very, very anti-union. Whether that is true or not, I don't know.

For some time, and maybe still now, the only Donrey paper that still was union was the one in Hilo, Hawaii, because the longshoremen wouldn't deliver the newsprint. Quite a few of the men were in the different unions. They weren't red-hot agitators. I had never felt kindly or unkindly towards the unions. As I told you, I had joined the first time, and then that folded.

Riess: What union was that?

Devlin: Well, in my early days, I would say in the late '30s, they organized the Newspaper Guild here in Vallejo. It was when Heywood Broun was still president. So you know how far back. That was under the, more or less, sponsorship of the Richmond guild. They were going to help us get started and tell us what to do and all. But the thing just dwindled away.

Riess: Was there any opposition to your membership by anyone?

Devlin: No. No. None. In fact, I asked my father at the time, because my father had done quite a bit in labor negotiations when he was in his earlier years. He said, "Do whatever you want, but if the others are joining I think, probably, you should go along." Which I did.

Riess: Did the Newspaper Guild cover the composing room also?

Devlin: No, they had their own union. They are typographical union.

There were five unions represented. I don't think I can remember them all, but typographical was one of the strongest, then the photoengraving--I think they were in the guild later--the guild, and circulation. There were five unions. There was no opposition from Senator Gibson because he had been a member of the printer's union since his days as a young, young man. So, there was no problem.

Riess: The Newspaper Guild was never a powerful group?

Devlin: It just more or less folded away.

Riess: Did you meet?

Devlin: We met a couple of times on Sunday afternoons. I remember coming up from Berkeley, and begrudging the fact that I had to come up Sunday afternoon. We never accomplished anything. The Richmond people who were going to come and speak to us and tell us what to do never came through.

Riess: So you never elected officers?

Devlin: I think we elected officers, but I have no idea who they were.

Then we were without any for a long time, any Newspaper Guild. When it was formed the next time--again, I couldn't tell you what year--I could join if I wanted to, there was no real opposition, but I was rather unhappy over the previous experience. And I was being paid--. I could see no advantages. So, I didn't join and nobody seemed to care much.

Riess: Who was management?

Devlin: Wyman Riley and Orvin Gaston. They were definitely management. I was a borderline case.

Riess: I see.

Devlin: The only reason I say that is that they [Riley and Gaston] said to me, "Now, you know, we consider you part of management." But I was not, and I could have joined, easily. Some of my friends urged me to.

Another thing, my two full-time assistants then were not particularly happy about joining. They did. They were kind of, "Oh, we wish we didn't have to."

Riess: But they did have to?

Devlin: They did have to, yes. So, it was that kind of a case. It wasn't that I was making any statement. Nobody much cared. I wasn't that valuable to either one.

I think that the final blow--of course, as I say, all this is hear-say, I wasn't in on any of the meetings--Donrey felt that the advertising staff was not bringing in enough money. Whether it was less than in the Gibson days or not, I don't know, but they were unhappy. (To my way of thinking, all they think about is advertising. They didn't care much about the news.)

So they decided that what they were going to do in the contract was that the advertising staff would receive no flat salaries. They would receive only commissions on their sales. Of course, the poor advertising staff was up in arms. Most of them were married and had kids.

Riess: They were union?

Devlin: Yes. They were in the Newspaper Guild. I remember that Roger Warnock was head of the guild at that time. So the other members, not only of the guild but of the union, felt that this was just unfair. There was a terrific feeling of this.

Out on Strike

Devlin: It must have been in the early '70s that the paper was sold. Yes, it would have been. Let me see. I'm trying to think. We had the V.I.P. for six years. We started in August [16] 1978. So it was sometime earlier [June 21] in 1978 that we had the strike.

[looking through old newspapers] In June of 1980 we [V.I.P.] had been publishing for a year and a half, and the community contributions made it possible for us to buy our own printing press. Here is the list of the donors, all the best people of Vallejo, and the old-timers. That [paper] I think will give you at least some of the years and facts. [See Appendices]

Wyman Riley went to the V.I.P. Well, he had already left. When Donrey came Wyman said he could see the handwriting on the wall. They never would have paid him the salary he was getting, and I'm sure they wouldn't have continued to pay me. Although the fact that--well, no, I didn't belong to the guild until two or three days before the strike. I joined then. But Wyman said from the early meetings that he sat in on, he knew that there was going to be a complete change. Which, of course, it was.

Riess: I am not clear about why you went out on strike, or what happened from the time of the sale of the Vallejo Times-Herald to Donrey, to the time you started the V.I.P.

Devlin: [added later] I checked with Jack Dailey, who is one of the few old-timers left. He came up with the facts. When Senator Gibson sold the paper we were still under our contract with him, so we worked under that until it expired. Then Donrey stalled and stalled on renegotiating for nineteen months, and that's when we

struck. And, of course, we also were striking in protest over the treatment of the advertising staff.

The five unions, they always met Sundays. They had this Sunday meeting and decided that they would be going out on strike. Of course, the guild people, Doug Cuthbertson and those from San Francisco, would come up and speak. Strangely enough, the two assistants in my department were opposed to the strike. They felt that it was better to remain, as much as we hated it.

Riess: Those were the two who had never really wanted to be union anyway?

Devlin: That's right. On hearing both sides of it, and the more I realized that if there was a strike nobody was going to get me to stay with Donrey, I joined. I think it was about two days before.

Then there was the awful shock of one of the San Francisco men coming in the office about two in the afternoon [June 21, 1978] and saying, "This paper is on strike. Get your things and get out right now." We dropped what we were doing in the middle of pages or stories or whatever and went out.

Riess: That must have been hard.

Devlin: It was hideous. It was hideous. It really was. I very seldom cry, but I remember crying as I went out. I was so damn mad to think that they could come in and do this, this outfit from Arkansas could come in and ruin so many lives. Of course, we kind of thought, "Well, they'll weaken. They'll say, 'Come on back.'" But they didn't. The picket lines went up immediately. The picket signs had already been printed.

Riess: Did Donrey negotiate in good faith with anyone?

Devlin: No. They were delighted to get rid of all of us. Well, I don't think they were delighted to get rid of me and a few of the key people. In fact, Dave Caffoe, who always treated me very, very nicely--he was a very smooth talker, a nice-looking, personable man--he had come in my office and said, "Now, you wouldn't think of going out on strike. Would you?" I said, "Yes, I am thinking of it."

"Well, don't do it," he said. "If you do that you know you'll never be able to come back on the paper." He said, "We wouldn't let you go here. Your salary will be the same. You'll keep the same office, and you'll have exactly what you had with Senator Gibson."

Senator Gibson spoke to me on the side and said, "Marion, don't go out. You've had a good career here. I promise you these are good people." (I think he was completely taken by them.) He said, "This is a good change. These are good people. Don't believe everything you hear. Now, you know if you go, there will be no way to get back." I realized that.

Jan and Mary Ann, as members of the guild, once the strike was ordered, they had no choice. These were all my closest friends on the paper, the sports editor and these people that I had worked with. I could no more cross a picket line with them on it! Besides, I felt they were right! I felt that this was a very unfair thing they were doing to the advertising people.

Riess: Luther Gibson was on the sidelines watching?

Devlin: Of course he wasn't there, but yes, he was still here in Vallejo.

Riess: It sounds like it would have been a kind of torture to him.

Devlin: He had always been a union man himself, and yet I--I don't know, I always felt he said that out of consideration for me.

I never have questioned the fact that I did the right thing. I hated those people then, and I haven't eased up. I don't love any of them now. Jimmie Jones, the general manager there, he and his wife and I are friends. I saw him at dinner this week. Jimmie came over and gave me a kiss. I like them.

Jimmie saw a good future ahead. You can't blame him. He had two children. I don't blame him, but he was the only one, I guess, who stayed.

Riess: What period of time did this all take place in? Are we talking about weeks?

Devlin: At least a year and a half.

Riess: Of negotiation all that time?

Devlin: Apparently. I'm sure there were negotiations, but I don't think that Donrey ever gave a thought to bringing us back. I think they felt--. They put in their own people. Most of them were scabs, so, of course, they came in here with ten strikes against them.

I know for a fact that the editor of the paper now, Colleen Truelson, whom I know through the Soroptimist Club, she told one of our photographers that she was hired--. She came from some

place, I don't know, out of state, and she did not know that there had ever been a strike here. She had no idea that there was the violent feeling against the Don Reynolds newspaper.

After she had been here a while, and she would hear people say, "Well, of course, we thought the old Times-Herald was so great," she began asking around. She said, "Why didn't you tell me that?" "Why should we?" She was hired without any knowledge of this bitter background. It was bitter.

As that newspaper [V.I.P., Sunday, June 8, 1980] will tell you, the good solid citizens got behind us. They formed a V.I.P. Supporters Club. The Presbyterian minister, who was Luther Gibson's minister, was the head of it. They bought us a used press.

Starting a Strike Paper, the V.I.P.

Riess: How and where did you decide to start the V.I.P.?

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Devlin: A group of the strikers had made their plans. They knew that the strike was inevitable. They had lined up the weirdest-looking little Italian grocery store that was the closest building to the Times-Herald. There was an alley between us. They had found that they could rent that for virtually nothing. Full of rats, it was a messy little place. That became our V.I.P. headquarters. That's where we got out the newspaper.

Riess: How did you decide that you were going to do another newspaper?

Devlin: I think they had that in mind.

Riess: Some people went off and got other jobs?

Devlin: Some did, yes, some who felt there was no place for a strike newspaper in Vallejo.

In many ways it was a dream, you know, like kids, "Let's have a show in so-and-so's backyard and raise money." The big stores like Safeway and Sears would never advertise in our paper because it was a strike newspaper. We got the little advertisers, and we got some of the big ones. But the fact that we lasted six years is amazing.

Riess: Didn't you get support from Teamsters and other unions?

Devlin: Yes, we did. I remember one day, we all took turns, not only at our own job, but I was working there and this man came up and he said, "Is this the Times-Herald newspaper?" I said, "No. That's next-door." "Well, I've got a load of newsprint for them."

I said, "You're not delivering it are you? You know, they're on strike." He said, "My God, nobody told me. You bet I'm not delivering it!" So he went over there and went in and told them he had it but he would not deliver it. If they wanted to phone his company they could make arrangements to pick it up themselves.

Yes, we got a lot of union support, but Vallejo has always been pretty much of a union town.

Riess: I should think that it would go down very badly around here.

Devlin: Well, it did in many ways. There were fund-raisers for us. Of course, we were getting pitiful salaries.

Riess: Didn't that feel awful, to set up shop right next to the paper itself?

Devlin: Oh, we just did that for spite. We knew it would kill them every time they'd go by and see us coming and going.

Riess: Was there ever any violence at all?

Devlin: There were a few cases of shoving and scuffling. The strikers were awfully good. They told me I didn't have to picket. I was awfully glad for many reasons, but primarily because my walking even then was painful.

Riess: There was enough staff so that you could both put out a paper and do picket duty?

Devlin: All our picket signs and everything we kept in this little store, and it went quite a ways back, so we had quite a bit of room. We had one area for the--.

Then we got Wyman Riley to come down. He had quit--. He was the representative for our congressman. He was representative for three congressmen, Bob Leggett, Vic Fazio, and then for Barbara Boxer when he died. But he was between congressmen then, and he came down and was our general director. His wife, Marjorie Riley, who hadn't worked since she was married, because she had seven

kids, she came down and wrote a column and later published two books.

We all did everything in the office. We would answer phones. Some of them worked the switchboard, those who were bright enough to do it. [laughs] I wasn't. We all pitched in. Periodically we would announce an open house. People would come down and just be appalled to see this little dump we were working in, remembering the nice places we had. They would bring down food and everything.

V.I.P. Advertisers, Circulation, Coverage, Loyalty

Riess: Your advertisers, what happened if a small store advertised in your paper? Then they wouldn't be taken by the Times?

Devlin: I don't know. I don't know.

Riess: In other words, there was pressure on the advertisers? How well did you do in advertising?

Devlin: Well, that paper [V.I.P., June 8, 1980] is nothing to judge by because that is primarily pictures of the new press, the open house and so forth. Yes, that is a list of the advertisers.

Riess: It looks like there couldn't have been too much pressure if State Farm was advertising with you.

Devlin: I think that the Donrey outfit would take almost any advertising. I think they would have done their best to keep it out.

Riess: How much did it cost to get out a paper like this? It was once a week wasn't it?

Devlin: It started out once a week. Then we went to twice a week, Wednesdays and Fridays. And by the time the paper folded it was five days a week.

My memory is a little hazy at the finish there because my sister, my last sister, was dying of emphysema. Her husband had died, and both her children were away, back East, so I moved in with her. She was on oxygen. I wasn't able to give it as much of my time in the last months. She died in '79. So, my mind is not too clear.

I can get some of those things from Jack Dailey, who is the only remaining city editor we have. He would remember. I'm in touch with him.

Riess: Was the V.I.P. paying salaries, or was everyone basically doing it as a volunteer?

Devlin: We did it primarily as volunteers, but we each got a small check. I can't even remember what mine was, but we did it primarily on a volunteer basis. We were making a little money, and the Newspaper Guild and unions supplemented what we took in from ads and subscriptions. There were certain ones who had to be paid.

The sad thing was that when the paper [V.I.P.] folded, we had about $82,000 on the books that advertisers owed us that we couldn't collect. And the salaries that were owed to our employees and other expenses came to just about eighty thousand.

Of course, after the paper folded, so many of our good friends and advertisers said, "Why didn't you let us know that you were so hard up? We could have gotten more money for you." Well, they couldn't have gotten enough to make it last. As I say, the big stores like Sears and Safeway and those wouldn't have anything to do with us.

Riess: What kind of exposure could you offer them? How many people saw the V.I.P.? Was it paid for by subscription or was it a give away?

Devlin: It was paid for by subscription, and it was delivered to your home or you could buy it at news stands, things like that. Of course, I'm sure there were outlying areas that we couldn't guarantee circulation to.

Riess: How many papers do you think you printed in the usual week?

Devlin: I don't know that. It may be in that little paper.

Riess: The Times-Herald was about twenty-seven thousand, I think.

Devlin: They claim a circulation that, I understand, is padded quite heavily. We still have some friends there. They gave us quite a few bits of information. Apparently, the circulation figure still is padded. I have no idea. I never was into that phase of the paper.

Riess: The strike was not by any means the death of the Times-Herald?

Devlin: Oh, no way.

Riess: In fact, it really didn't hurt the paper?

Devlin: It hurt them as far as friends. There is a bitterness, not only from the strikers, but a lot of other people who knew people on the paper, and who expected a good paper even though these new people had it. They just hate the paper we're getting now.

I was at this, as I said, board meeting today, and it came up. One of the men said, "Boy, they don't know what a proofreader is down there." He said, "For six days in a row they've had the high temperature for the day and the low temperature reversed." And he said, "It looks so silly on page one, but nobody tells them."

Nearly every week there will be two or three obituaries repeated because they've made a goof-up in the first one. There is a carelessness about it. I know that sounds like sour grapes, but it isn't only that. It is that we did get out a good newspaper, and they are getting out a rotten one.

I know I have here, and I'll drop in the mail for you, the last edition of the V.I.P. we got out [August 31, 1984]. That might have some information that you would want.

Riess: I would really like that. I would also like an issue that is a representative issue. In other words, I would like to see how much of a paper it was at its best.

Devlin: At its best it still looked pretty make-shift because, as I said, it was a used press that we got. We had the same photographers and photoengraver, but the press work was not good. It just wasn't. It was a make-shift paper.

Riess: Did you have access to wire service or anything like that with this new paper? What did you attempt to cover in the V.I.P.? Did you do national and international news?

Devlin: No, it was strictly local news.

Riess: Could the V.I.P. ever have become a real second newspaper in Vallejo?

Devlin: Yes, I think it could have become a second paper. Luther Gibson began with a worse paper than that. I think if somebody had the drive, somebody young--. Wyman could have done it, but of course, he couldn't afford to work on that.

But when Luther began his newspaper career he got out this little paper in Antioch. The first one or two papers he owned here were little bitty things, but he built them and then was able to absorb the others until he got a really good newspaper. Then, he was able to buy the Benicia paper and Martinez.

I think somebody could have, on the basis of good will that we had from the representative people, I think it could have been done. But certainly most of us were getting along in years. I was one of the senior citizens, but even the younger ones then were encumbered with husbands, and kids, and college educations, and unless you really have an awful lot of drive and an awful lot of money--. We couldn't have done it. I wish we could.

Riess: So, it was a bittersweet thing, putting this newspaper out?

Devlin: We had Thursday afternoon meetings. Doug Cuthbertson--I don't know if you know him, he's been with the guild for years in San Francisco--and I've forgotten who the other two were, but they were the top boys and the big super salesmen, they would come up here and tell us what a good job we were doing.

"You're going to win this thing. Don't you worry. You're going to win this." Get us all pepped up, you know. I will admit, I guess with the advantage of age, I didn't really think we were going to, after the first year or two, and yet we all were encouraged by the support we got here in Vallejo.

Our salaries were paid by the guild and unions. Yes, that's what I was trying to figure. Then we tried to supplement them with what we had. But I know that they said that the salaries just about balanced the amount on the books. So they were supplementing them somewhat. Even with what the guild paid us, it was nothing like what we had been earning.

Riess: The V.I.P. was always considered only to be a strike paper?

Devlin: Oh, yes. Always.

Riess: What did you do about the women's news? How about the loyalty of all of the brides and the clubs? They must have been very torn.

Devlin: Oh, and they were so loyal. They would come into the V.I.P. "I'm not going to give this story to the people next door. They get things all wrong."

Jan and Mary Ann, of course, were with me. We all divided up our time so that none of us really was working full-time. We would take certain days. I did a weekly column. Jan, I think, got out the food pages then. Mary Ann did a lot of the club news. The three of us, and different former employees--. Mary Ann's mother, Jeannette Davis, came in and gave quite a bit of time, just volunteered it. We did get quite a bit of volunteer help.

Riess: So you were actually taking away news from the Times-Herald?

Devlin: Yes. We definitely were doing that.

You remember when Prince Philip and Queen Elizabeth came to San Francisco? I went down with our photographer, Wes Gibson, then with the V.I.P. We were there when her plane came in. I wrote a story. I didn't interview her. Wes got the picture. So the following morning the V.I.P. had a picture of Queen Elizabeth's arrival, and a localized story. [See Appendices] I don't remember if the Times-Herald had anything. They may have had an AP story. But we just took delight on the V.I.P. in rubbing their noses in, "See, we know how to do things." We tried. We did.

The loyalty that we had built up when we were on the Times-Herald followed us to the V.I.P. That meant a great deal. When people would think newspaper people, they would think of us. They didn't think of these Johnny-come-latelys that the Times-Herald was hiring, because none of them were Vallejo people. I don't think they wanted Vallejo people.

Riess: Where did they get the scabs then?

Devlin: Anybody who would come looking for a job. Of course, jobs were scarce.

Riess: You didn't have to be a journalist?

Devlin: Oh, some of them had worked on college newspapers.

One thing that I think is rather indicative is that even now, after all this time, virtually every week there is a new byline or so, and one or more will drop out of the paper.

The only reporter they had on the paper that I thought wrote like a professional was Jean Silverman, and she is very good. She left here to take a job in San Francisco. She told me that she hated to leave Vallejo because she loved Vallejo. She had really made quite a few friends here. She did a good job. But she said

she just had to, because the pay was so bad here. She was doing P.R. for some hospital and medical group in San Francisco. They had offered her a sizable increase, and then came back with a second offer, and she couldn't refuse.

But the others they have had have been--they have one or two who write pretty well, I think. Not that I'm any great judge, but to me they write good stories. Most of the writing is atrocious. They don't even try to learn names. They are careless on street names. Things that people pick up on. Family names, old-time family names they don't check.

Riess: Too bad it isn't a better paper. It's not that they had to economize when they bought it.

Devlin: No. That's true. And, of course, then almost the first thing they did was build a beautiful great big building right across the street from where we were.

Riess: To get away from the rat's nest that you were occupying?

Devlin: Well, that's still there, because they're right across the street and the rat's nest is still standing. The old Times-Herald building that Senator Gibson had they use for newsprint storage, and I don't know what else.

I've been in the new building two or three times. It looks so luxurious. Jimmie Jones's office, which he decorated himself, is very fine. Believe me, they're spending money on things like that. I know that Brendan Riley, Wyman's son, is in charge of the AP bureau in Carson City or Reno. I've forgotten which. He's said the same thing, that their [Donrey] Reno newspaper is very luxurious when you step in. Everything is fine, but salaries are low.

Riess: Does it have that extreme right political slant?

Devlin: They didn't show it for a long time. I wasn't even aware that they had a political slant. But it came out during the recent elections for governor. It came out very strongly for Wilson, which amazed me. They are keeping it kind of under control because Vallejo is just such a solidly Democratic, blue collar town that I think they have good sense enough not to go overboard.

Riess: Did any other unions join you on the picket line?

Devlin: Yes. Of course, we had lots of visiting pickets from the guild and our unions, the five that were represented. They would come

from Richmond and Oakland. They would frequently come up and take the Saturday and Sunday picketing so that our people could have a little time off. We had wonderful support. Several of them had fund-raising events for us.

Riess: What groups would have fund-raising events?

Devlin: I meant, in this case, the other unions and guilds. Some of the--I was trying to think. There were some of them. I remember that. Whenever we would have these monthly, I think, open-house parties the women would bring down sandwiches.

Riess: What was the idea of that, to have an open house?

Devlin: So people could see the awful little place we were working in, [chuckles] the awful accommodations, and compare them to the Times-Herald ones which they had seen. They would all go home and just be so shocked to think that we could get a newspaper out.

Really, you would not believe the space that we had. It was nothing in this little store. The front of the store was for the editorial end, and then advertising in the back, circulation. The photographers, I don't know where they did their processing, but it was unbelievable. We would show off, "Look. Poor poverty-stricken wretches that we are."

Riess: Did you go out for stories, or did you depend on everything being called in?

Devlin: Oh, no. We went out, because phone bills--every bill was high. It was hard, really, to finance this. Getting newsprint--. I don't know how we lasted six years.

VI THOUGHTS ON LUTHER GIBSON, AND VALLEJO TODAY

Financial Advice from Luther Gibson

Devlin: Something I thought of, another thing to be grateful to Luther Gibson for, was when the Newspaper Guild was reestablished here, and it was a question of "would I, or wouldn't I go in," I decided not to. Without my knowledge--I finally was told--Luther Gibson insisted that I be covered by the guild retirement system, and that my dues or my contributions be withheld from my paycheck. He didn't ask me about it at all, or I would certainly have agreed, but I wondered.

Finally, after several weeks, I went into the bookkeeper and I said, "I can't understand it. My paycheck has gone down. Why?" "That's for your guild retirement." I said, "But I don't belong." "Well, Senator Gibson said."

I asked him about it and he said, "Oh, yes." He said, "I felt I definitely wanted you covered by that." I guess I thought Orvin would tell me about it, but they didn't. Well, believe me, it's a very nice retirement. I'm awfully glad to have it, but I would never have it without him.

Riess: In fact, if you hadn't had that, what would you have had?

Devlin: Well, he looked out for his good employees. He owned the printing and publishing company, which did commercial printing. (It still exists.) It printed the Benicia newspaper, and such.

About eight or ten of us on the paper whom he considered particularly loyal employees--Wyman was one, I was one, and a very dear person who had been the bookkeeper there for years, and she would have been considered, I guess, a white collar employee--we were given the opportunity, if we wanted, to go in for up to fifteen thousand dollars as an investment [in the printing and publishing company].

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Devlin: It worked out very nicely. Unfortunately, his grandson, as I said, who is operating it now, decided a few years ago that he wanted to buy us all out. According to the terms of the agreement we had no choice. So he did buy us out.

Another thing that Luther Gibson did for me that I've never forgotten: he was one of the co-owners of Levee's Department Store, which was our major department store. They were changing managers, and I guess they wanted to make a lot of improvements.

Again, there were fifteen, an even fifteen of us, and I was the only woman. They were his closest men friends, the Chevrolet dealer here and different ones who were close friends. We were offered a chance to go in, again for the magic term fifteen thousand flat. We could go in for ten or fifteen thousand. He thought it was a good investment. He told me about it. He said, "There is no hurry, but if you would like to, I would advise you to do it."

I talked it over with mother and she said, "Well, anything he would advise I would certainly go along with." I had to get a bank loan. My mother signed for me. But anyway, I went in for the fifteen thousand and we did very, very well on that.

When a new manager came in quite a few years later he said he wasn't about to work for fifteen or sixteen bosses. So we had to sell out, but we sold out at a nice little profit, on the strength of which I was able to take a trip to Europe, put in hardwood floors at my apartment, and things like that. So, I had lots of good reasons for being very grateful to Luther.

Riess: Paternalistic, but that's all right.

Devlin: Very. I told you I know about his reluctance to hire me, because if I was no good it would be very hard to fire Frank Devlin's daughter. If he liked you and if he thought you were doing a good job--.

I can't begin to tell you the philanthropies, the funerals he paid for, the mortgages he bought up with the understanding that nobody know about it. I think I mentioned that to you before too. He was a most generous person.

Riess: Then it had to end.

Devlin: Yes. I would never give up the experience on that little V.I.P. People I thought I knew well on the Times-Herald--.

When you're thrown together, when the men and women are using a toilet the size of a phone booth for part of the time until we got a second one set up, you really get to know people. People that I considered my good friends on the Times-Herald, we became close, close friends on the V.I.P. It was an association that was just fantastic.

Riess: And you were thrust out of your social pages into the city beat?

Devlin: I would do feature stories and I did a weekly column. Oh, no. I was doing club news, and social news, and so were Mary Ann and Jan. Everybody was doing some of what they had done on the Times-Herald, but we all filled in for other things.

Yes, I went out on quite a few straight news stories. It was when I was on the V.I.P. that I went over to the wedding of Charles and Diana. I mentioned that. They did a huge splash on that, you know.

Riess: You took yourself, paid your own way on that one.

Devlin: Yes. We had a great old time.

Wyman Riley, Congressional Representative

Riess: What is the Association of Catholic Newsmen? What's the purpose of the organization? What has it done over the years? Wyman Riley and Mary Ellen Leary were in that. Were you?

Devlin: No, I've never belonged.

Riess: Oh, I thought somehow you were.

Devlin: No. Mary Ellen I know is very active in it, and Wyman was too. They've been friends for years. In fact, the first time I met

Mary Ellen was in Wyman's office. I don't know enough about it to say. I've never belonged. I'm an honorary member of the--up here--Catholic Social Service Auxiliary, but I'm not a joiner in most other groups. I wouldn't know a thing about that. Wyman was very active in that.

Riess: Wyman sounds like a most remarkable fellow.

Devlin: He was a remarkable person, a remarkable editor, a remarkable father. I talked to his wife last night. Unfortunately, he died of cancer. His oldest brother, ten years older than Wyman, died this week of cancer. Wyman was one of the brainiest men. He and Orvin Gaston were two of the brightest minds I ever knew in my life.

Riess: They were never lured away from Vallejo?

Devlin: No. When Wyman graduated from St. Mary's College, one of his classmates was a Napa boy and told Wyman he thought he could get him a job on the Napa Register for the summer. So he went up there to work, and that first summer he met Marjorie, who was working on the other Napa newspaper, the Journal. They were married, and had two children.

Vallejo was considered a big newspaper compared to Napa. He came down here, and I know he never would have left the Times-Herald as long as it was in Senator Gibson's hands. When it was sold, he became congressional representative here, first for Bob Leggett.

Riess: Now, what does that mean, congressional representative?

Devlin: Well, he's in charge of the congressmen's local office. So that if people want favors or anything from the congressmen, they go in. He's the liaison between the district and the congressmen. Of course, Bob Leggett was the Vallejo one. When Bob left, and Vic Fazio was elected, he persuaded Wyman to stay on in the same capacity. So he served for three congressmen. He was doing the same thing here for Barbara Boxer until his final illness.

Riess: All Democrats.

Devlin: Oh, he was a rabid Democrat.

Riess: Would you describe yourself as a rabid Republican?

Devlin: No, but I would say I'm a very strong Republican.

Marion Devlin with Maybelle and Luther Gibson at a party honoring Miss Devlin for winning her eighth California Newspaper Publishers Association trophy for Best Women's Section in 1970. Luther Gibson said of Marion Devlin, "There will never be another Marion. All of Vallejo respects her for her ability--and loves her for herself."

Gibson for Senate

Devlin: When Luther ran for the state senate he took me off my job at the newspaper in February. From February until November I was in charge of his political office here. Now, as much as I think he may have admired my ability, he thought that having a Republican there in his office would help a little bit with some of the Republican votes too. [laughter.]

That, again, was almost as interesting as working on the V.I.P. Here I was with a beautiful office at the Casa de Vallejo. I had one full-time assistant, a wonderful friend of mine. We had about four or five on our secretarial staff who came in and would work nights. Two or three of them were secretaries at Mare Island.

Every Friday morning there would be a steering committee meeting of about a dozen of his closest friends, all men. He was very definitely a man's man. He didn't care much about women. I mean, I don't think he felt too comfortable with them. We had this meeting at the headquarters. I would have coffee ready for the men. They would all bring in their reports of what they had done during the week for his campaign.

There were two or three automobile dealers, the leading insurance man, all his closest friends from the duck club. They were all big duck clubbers and golfers. They were the wheelers and dealers of Vallejo. I hated to see that experience end, but he was elected and I was glad for that.

Riess: What were you doing exactly?

Devlin: I was writing, I was doing some news releases, but primarily I was pulling all the cords together. Contacting all these dozen men to be sure they would have their reports on Friday and find out if they were really working at it. And once a week I took campaign news releases to the other newspapers in the county, Vacaville, Dixon, Rio Vista, Benicia, Fairfield-Suisun. He [Luther Gibson] was up at the head-quarters, of course, everyday. We took over what had been the radio station up there, very comfortable suite of offices.

I love politics. I would never, ever want to get into them, but I just love being on the sidelines. As I said earlier, I voted for Roosevelt. I voted for Pearce Young when he ran for the

assembly. I believe in voting for the candidate, but on the whole, I would say, I am 85 percent Republican.

No other candidate--Luther ran against Howard Vaughan, a very wealthy rancher from Dixon--no other person could have done for this area what Luther Gibson did as state senator. There aren't many communities as small as Vallejo that have nine exits from Highway 80. He got our county fair here.

Riess: How big is the state senatorial district? What does it comprise?

Devlin: It includes Davis, Dixon, Fairfield, Suisun, Benicia, of course, all of Solano county. My father was assemblymen from this district, but Luther was state senator.

Riess: Does it include Marin?

Devlin: No. The U.S. senatorial district is very badly cut up. That's the one Barbara Boxer represents. The only reason Vallejo was included was because of redistricting, and they wanted this little Democratic stronghold. If you look at the districting for her job, it's ridiculous. She has San Francisco's Chinatown, parts of San Francisco, a good part of Marin, I guess most of Marin, and then this bite out of Vallejo.

Riess: Shorelines.

Devlin: Yes. Phil Burton is the one who was in charge of that redistricting for his brother John, and Barbara Boxer. I got to know her through Wyman. She would go down to the office there. Wyman had a marvelous secretary, whom I know very well. A couple of times when she was off welcoming a new grandchild, and he would be short a secretary, I would go down and volunteer my services.

I met Barbara Boxer several times then. She is far more liberal than I would like. I would say I'm a middle-of-the-road Republican. I'm not ultra-conservative.

Riess: How does she operate with this probably not-so-liberal community?

Devlin: Well, after Wyman's death she closed her Vallejo office, which I think was a foolish mistake. I guess she felt that once she was in she didn't really need it.

Wyman did an awful lot of good for her, because he had been on the Democratic State Central Committee, on the local committee, and on the state. I had been on the Republican and on the state --just appointed as kind of an honorary title when they say you're

on the state committee--but he had the Democratic contacts. The three congressmen who had him were all very, very grateful to get him. It was a good job.

Duck Clubs

Riess: You referred to this group of men as duck club members.

Devlin: Yes. This is a little cluster--. When you come across the Carquinez Bridge, if you look over and up the channel--you can't see them particularly, but I know where they are to look--there is a little group of duck clubs there. There are quite a few of the big, wealthy people of upper Solano County, Rio Vista, and different ones.

Luther, I think, built his own club, or owned it anyway. Bought it. Still owns it. The family owns it unless they sold it in the meantime. He entertained the navy a lot there. Then he would give his own private parties.

When my sister and I left to go over to the coronation, and were leaving to go on our trip around the world, he gave a party there, a dinner, he and his wife for the two of us. For women to go to the duck club, you felt pretty good about it. You would say, "Going up to Luther's duck club today." [laughter] He had this wonderful Felix who cooked like a dream. His wife did the serving, and there was a big bar area, a cocktail lounge.

To get there you crossed this little strip of water, not very long, on a funny little barge. One of our messenger boys from the newspaper was the barge boy, and when Luther would have a party you would go there. It was a semi-island. You could have gotten out, I suppose, if you would have driven way down and around. You parked your car--there was no parking close to the place either--you parked your car and then the barge would take you over. It was comfortably furnished, like a mountain cabin. Very comfortable, very nice.

So yes, the duck club is the group up here that his friends belonged to. And on certain days, I think St. Patrick's Day and it may have been some big football games, the men would always go out there. It was lots of fun. It was a good place.

Riess: So then each member of a duck club--? You all have your own establishments up there?

Devlin: He owned the club. You were invited there only as guests. There were no dues.

Riess: Other individuals also had their clubs?

Devlin: There are other clubs, yes. It's a little colony of duck clubs. They all whine and wail about how scarce the ducks are. I'm always rooting for the ducks. [laughter]

Riess: Oh, yes. Absolutely.

Was there ever any mention in the paper about these duck clubs?

Devlin: No.

Riess: Never referred to as an institution?

Devlin: It was never mentioned in the paper.

The Gibsons never wanted any personal publicity. She was a tremendous asset to him. She was a beautiful little woman, very tiny. Dressed elegantly. I don't think she had an enemy in the world. She just was bubbling good will towards everybody. They entertained beautifully, both at their home here, and then he would at the duck club. They led a very comfortable, very affluent life.

They had this only daughter, Jeanne, who graduated from Stanford. She is now living in their home. She had three children. Her husband, as I said, worked for a time on the paper. I think he was a very bright young man.

Luther Gibson's Vallejo

Riess: Luther Gibson had a house up here, and the duck club, and his friends here, and he represented these people, and he had his newspaper. Do you think he ever aspired to be a member of the Bohemian Club in San Francisco or the Pacific Union or something like that?

Devlin: I don't think that meant a thing to him. I don't believe it did.

I remember my father's club that he loved was the Olympic. One of his law partners wanted to propose his name for membership in the Bohemian Club and he said, "What would I do there?" He said, "When I have any free time, I want to be home." I think that was Luther's feeling, that what free time he had he wanted to spend here. I don't think he had any aspirations to be away.

Riess: Or he didn't want a larger constituency.

Devlin: No. When he was in Sacramento he commuted every day. He had a very, very good senatorial aide, Dug [Dugald] Gillies, who did the driving usually. Luther drove too--he was a fast driver--and Dug said he scared the wits out of him. But he commuted back and forth. He wouldn't even stay up there. He was very much a family man, very devoted to his wife and daughter.

Riess: Do you think he was not a city boy in the sense that he wouldn't have wanted to be part of the larger social scene?

Devlin: I don't know. I think he fitted in very well. He was a very affable person. To meet at a party or in any social gathering, he was one of the most gracious and affable persons, but in the office he was all business, always. We used to laugh when he would come in: he would kind of put his head down and just head right for his office as if the world depended on him. He was all business at the office.

Riess: But he was so much a self-made man, rather than an old family money man. I wonder whether the old family money thing made him uncomfortable?

Devlin: I never was aware of it.

Riess: We probably shouldn't analyze Luther Gibson, but it is interesting to hear about him. Do you think that Vallejo was made in some way in his image, in the image of what he thought it could be, through the paper?

Devlin: I think yes. I wouldn't have necessarily put it in those words. They're better than I could choose. He did so many things to bring Vallejo along. Well, just a small thing, getting Ed Sullivan and all the big columnists out here for that Mare Island Centennial celebration. I don't know anybody in Vallejo who could have done that or who would have even thought of it. He thought big. He really did.

The fact that Vallejo has one of the more adequate water supplies is due entirely to his efforts. He is the one who pushed

through the Monticello Dam. He and Earl Warren were very, very good friends, and he worked hard with the publisher of the Tribune, Knowland, Bill Knowland. (I have a picture that was taken here when he had the Knowlands come up here to some party.)

He worked with Knowland and Warren, not with Warren on the Monticello Dam, but with Knowland he did. I've forgotten what the contacts were besides that, but he just fought to get the Monticello Dam. We also have the Vallejo Lakes, which were established years before Luther Gibson. We have a better water supply than most communities. It still is, of course, threatened because of the drought.

He did so many of those things that I can't begin to think of now. He had his finger in every pie, and not only for Vallejo, but for the area. Solano Community College, he had a great deal to do with getting that established.

City and Regional Planning

Riess: Has Vallejo had what you would call strong city planning, or strong building review committees?

Devlin: I would say that every group that they've had on planning has fumbled the ball. When you think of what could have been done with our waterfront--. It is pathetic. Right now they're on the final stages, as I think I showed you last week, of restoring what they call "Old Town," the first couple of blocks of Georgia Street.

When we had redevelopment here--I can't remember the years--all of our old property mostly was torn down, our Carnegie Library, which was a lovely old building. Redevelopment bought up a lot of property. They bought an old place that belonged to us for $7,500. The price was set. Our attorney advised us. He said, "You can go to court, but you can't buck city hall, and you'll just have court costs." That wasn't too awful, I guess, but nothing developed the way they said it would.

Riess: Is that in the '50s?

Devlin: Yes, it would have been, I think, in the '50s, possibly late '40s.

This "Old Town," they're putting in new lighting fixtures. They're putting in new trees. And they're putting in brick cross-

ways. But the merchants have had such a hell of a time. The street has been closed for months and months. It was closed over the Christmas period. The merchants have just left the area. Whether it will build up again I doubt, because everything, as you know, in every city is going out. The Solano Mall at Fairfield-Suisun has a beautiful Macy's, an Emporium, Sears, Penney's, Mervyn's. The only department store we have left is a Mervyn's and a K-Mart.

Riess: And so, this is sort of a desperate effort.

Devlin: Exactly.

Riess: The few remaining merchants have already left because it's taken so long to get done.

Devlin: Right.

We've had conscientious people in the planning department. I'm sure every time there is discussion they call in a consultant. Every consultant gets a huge amount of money. Then there are these little half-way efforts. My feeling I know is echoed by an awful lot of people. It's not my opinion alone. Our downtown area is sad.

Now I hear that Macy's and the Emporium, which are the two anchors up at Solano Mall, both those stores are in trouble. The Emporium they say is going to remain there. We have a couple of good plazas. Larwin Plaza here has a big theater and small shops. K-Mart is doing beautifully I hear.

Riess: Well, it's a testimonial to your blue collar population.

What's happened to Macy's? I thought there was a growing population around here.

Devlin: There is, and I can't believe--.

As I think I told you, I'm on the board of directors of the Credit Bureau. Those men are far more knowledgeable than I. We were discussing this at our board meeting this month. The consensus is that Macy's is having some bad months, but there is no danger of them going under.

Riess: If Macy's needs me, I'll be there! [laughing]

Devlin: This is a wonderful Macy's. When they put it in they upgraded everything. I can go up there and do well in everything but

clothes. They don't have my sizes; I have a hard time finding those. But shoes, their cosmetics, jewelry, the housewares, it's a wonderful store.

Then, we used to have a wonderful Penney's here, and a wonderful Sears. With five other apartments besides the one I was living in to keep stocked with curtains and window shades and things of the sort, I could head right to Penney's or Sears and get what I wanted. Both those stores are gone.

Riess: Let's say we had the old Times-Herald still. What could you as the women's page editor do to help? Anything?

Devlin: Practically nothing.

Senator Gibson might have been able to do something. He was a man of action. He may not have been liked by everybody, but he was followed by the businessmen, because I think they realized that he knew what he was talking about. He had certainly succeeded where nobody else had. It takes leadership.

Riess: Rivers and Rubin did a case study back in 1969-70. They looked at how the regional newspapers, including the Times-Herald, handled the story of student unrest, and handled the story of the Pueblo affair. They also looked at growing regional organization and the environmental movement.

On the first two issues, the Times-Herald came out about where you'd expect, close to the bottom, probably because Vallejo is further away from the center. They were a little more interested in the Pueblo affair, probably because of Mare Island.

But on regional organization they [Rivers and Rubin] write, "Luther Gibson attacked a proposal with a vengeance...lengthy denunciations against the concept because of the fear that Sonoma, Solano, Napa counties would be dominated by larger urban areas and dragged into problems of neither their concern nor making."[10] They [Rivers and Rubin] say that it is a publisher's right to respond that way, but they don't think the reporting on it was very good.

Would you say that maybe Vallejo was a little reactionary on this subject?

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[10]William L. Rivers and David M. Rubin, A Region's Press: Anatomy of Newspapers in the San Francisco Bay Area, Institute of Governmental Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 1971, p. 132-133.

Devlin: We were terribly reactionary. And that opinion--I remember how vehement he was on that--is still held.

Riess: And it's an issue today.

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Devlin: That's right.

We had one councilwoman who ran for mayor the last time, and was defeated. She was--I'm trying to think--. I was going to say she was completely in agreement with them, and now I'm not sure. She may have been on the other side. I remember she was very vehement about it. Barbara Kondylis. She trailed for mayor, simply because she is a very controversial person, and when she takes a stand she is willing to go out for it. At first I didn't care too much for her opinions, but the more I listened to them, the more I realized she had done a lot of thinking and homework on them.

Riess: Well, here it is twenty years later, and once again a regional organization is being touted in Bay Vision 2020. Not all of the regional areas have responded, but the first response was from up here saying, "Hey, we don't want any of that."

Devlin: I'm not surprised. I haven't read the Chronicle yet, but I'll certainly read that.

Race-related Problems

Devlin: At present time, they are also worried about redistricting. The fact that Vallejo is so solidly Democratic has made this a prime spot for politics and politicians. I think that has dominated the thinking a lot.

Now, what that would have to do with this, there's no connection. But when you mention the unrest and the Pueblo incident, I do know that at the time we were kind of embarrassed to read our paper, those of us who read the other papers and knew what was happening. There was a lot of trouble in some of the schools, particularly Vallejo high school.

Riess: Trouble, but it wasn't reported?

Devlin: That's right. If you don't put it in the paper, people will never know it ever happened. That sort of thing.

Riess: Could you do anything about that as staff?

Devlin: I don't think any of us--.

Riess: When you say, "We were troubled," at what level are you talking about "we?"

Devlin: Well, I'm thinking primarily of Wyman Riley and the city editors, because we would talk among ourselves, where we wouldn't talk to, maybe, everybody on the paper. Most of us felt alike. We had two awfully good city editors there for years, Red Buehrer and Jack Dailey. They and Wyman I think--. Wyman couldn't say, couldn't speak up, because he was the mouthpiece for Senator Gibson, of course.

Riess: Senator Gibson let it be known that that was not the interest of the Vallejo Times-Herald?

Devlin: I don't know that he ever did, but I'm sure he got his thinking over.

Riess: How did the paper cover the cold war, and Vietnam?

Devlin: I wish I could remember more. I really don't know. I don't remember.

The Korean War was much closer to those of us on the paper, because three of our key men were over there, our two photographers, and one of our very, very well-loved composing room printers. He, incidentally, was shot in the chest in Korea. He came back and was recalled to Vietnam. He protested that he was on disability and they said, "That's all right, you're going." It was either the third or the fifth day there he stepped on a land-mine and lost both legs.

Riess: God!

Devlin: And he came back to work with the paper. I often said if some good columnist like Fulton Lewis, in those days, or someone like that had gotten his story--.

And he's terrific! I never saw anybody accept a fate like that. Of course, yes, the government provided him with a wonderful wheelchair, and they put ramps in his home so he could

go up and down. But he had a wife and two small daughters. I see him and his wife every now and then.

So the Korean War we all were more conscious of simply because we had more people there. Vietnam, I remember being appalled at hearing about it, and seeing it on television, and just praying it would get over, very much the way I feel now about the Persian Gulf.

Riess: Was there a Vietnam war protest movement?

Devlin: No. I don't remember any.

Now, we had a protest movement over this war [Persian Gulf]. A march around Saint Vincent's Catholic Church that went on for I've forgotten how many hours. That was pictured, and the story, but it was very low key. There were no bad demonstrations. Vallejo is kind of a quiet town that way.

Riess: Rivers and Rubin had one criticism of Wyman Riley, for whom they had respect generally. They said he felt the Times-Herald had taken the lead in almost every worthwhile community project, and had been a factor in the city's freedom from any racial trouble. But they thought he had his head in the sand about that, that there was plenty of trouble in the city. This is in 1970.

Devlin: I would say that he was well aware of that. He was aware because, as I say, he and his wife and I--I talk to his wife nearly every night--.

Wyman and I had a very close relationship on the paper. So did Orvin Gaston. I can remember Wyman telling me these stories about some of the racial incidents and saying, "For heaven sake's, don't pass this on, because it isn't generally known." He knew them. But I imagine that he felt that he was the spokesmen for Senator Gibson--.

Wyman was one of the most forthright persons in the world. Hearing that, I can imagine him saying it and not believing a word of it. Maybe he did feel that they weren't that vital, but I remember two or three where he would say, "Don't pass this on to anybody," and of course I never did. He did know about them.

Riess: Families need to know what's going on in the schools that their children are going to, and that's another beat for the local newspapers.

Devlin: We had a principal at Vallejo High School then who--and I've heard this from so many people who had children there--if there was a brawl or a fight between blacks and whites, he backed the blacks every time. He was white.

I had a very dear friend, who has since died, who taught at the high school. There were two big black students who started a fight at the rear of his classroom. Fred told them to quit, and they did not. Fred went back to stop it. He was small, slight, and one of the boys picked him up and threw him over a row of desks.

He landed on his back and neck, and he was invalided for life. He had to wear a neck brace for the rest of his life. He couldn't finish the term. I don't remember, but I think his salary stopped as of then. When he protested to the school board they said, "No. Anybody who couldn't control a class should not be a teacher." And he was let go.

Riess: What a hideous story.

Devlin: He and his wife just grieved themselves to death.

Riess: Was that story covered?

Devlin: No. No, it wasn't. Well, at the time nobody realized how badly he was hurt. I remember telling Wyman about it, because Fred and his wife were good friends of my sister's and mine. He said, "Yes, I heard that."

They had gone to the school board, and the school board said, "Well, if you had a child, would you want your child at a school where the teacher couldn't control them?" Fred died, I guess, about three years ago.

But that principal was notorious. He was well liked. He belonged to Rotary or Kiwanis. Everybody thought he was great, except the parents who had kids there who tangled with any of the blacks. The black kids automatically won, because he knew which side his bread was buttered on.

Riess: It's a complicated story, I guess a hard one for a newspaper to handle.

Devlin: I think the one feeling, the feeling that I had from Wyman and I guess from him maybe through Luther, is that the top could blow off any day here in Vallejo. The blacks were unhappy, and with good cause. Any incident, if it was blown out of proportion, or

if it was even not blown out that far, there could be such a major upheaval.

Now--well, I don't want to digress on that--there are certain areas in town that I wouldn't drive through alone at night: South Vallejo, and Country Club Crest, where most of the better ones own homes. It's where the prosperous blacks live, so the black drug dealers go out there for customers. I think someday there will be a real upheaval. We have some wonderful blacks, some terrific ones.

The reason it's uppermost in my mind is that I attended a meeting Tuesday morning at the museum where one of our top police officers spoke, telling women how to protect themselves when they were out marketing, about not carrying hand bags, things like that. He mentioned the fact that many of the offenders are black. They're hungry. They need the money. They want it for drugs, most of them. To avoid shopping in the late afternoon.

Safeway over here, the one that you face when you come into town, that has been the scene of several purse snatchings.

Riess: You're kidding!

Devlin: Oh, yes. Under no circumstances to go at night. And he said even having a man with you doesn't always help. He gave really an alarming talk, and I think he was right. Some of the vociferous blacks are, I think, really feeling it. They haven't gotten enough fast enough. Probably they're quite right.

Riess: They are here because they found jobs here in wartime?

Devlin: A lot of them, and they are mostly the better ones. There are an awful lot of them coming up here from Richmond. So many of our arrests are young blacks from Richmond.

There are two gangs in Vallejo, the police officer told us. One is primarily Asian, principally Filipino, the other is blacks. He said most of the crime in Vallejo, the majority of it by far, is not against civilians, it's between the two gangs. Rows over somebody's girlfriend, or somebody said something, and they'll take over.

The vandalism to our schools has been bad. That is put in the police roundup, but it's not played up.

An Unbelievably Nice Community

Riess: How does Vallejo fit into the bigger picture of the Bay Area?

Devlin: I think Vallejo, in so many ways, has always been looked upon as a poor relation. I think that their feeling is that if they can't be accepted on equal footing that they would rather go their own way. Which has gotten us pretty far along.

I think Vallejo is an absolutely, unbelievably nice community.

The thing that has impressed me--and I may have said this earlier, I talk so much--the one thing that I think is an awfully nice compliment about Vallejo is that so many navy families that have been here for duty come back when they retire. We have a big colony of retired navy. They all said, "Oh, we couldn't wait. We bought our home before we left." They do that. Our climate is wonderful.

I wish our downtown business was better, I wish we had more good stores, but you can't have everything. Levee's was a great department store. The City of Paris was here, Jackson's, Breuner's. We still have a Breuner's. I guess it's typical of most communities this size that people go to the malls.

I used to feel that I just had to go to San Francisco. Now, if I really want to get things, I'll go over to Walnut Creek. I think that is a very pleasant shopping block there. We do have one very nice shop for women's apparel here, but it is definitely for high style and for young women, very young women. We have a very fine men's store. But they don't have too much else. We have a couple of good jewelers.

Riess: So that is one big change, that it is a bedroom community. And as a bedroom community it probably is reading different newspapers, more San Francisco Chronicles and fewer Vallejo Times-Heralds?

Devlin: Perhaps. I would think so. Well, a lot of my friends take the Chronicle and the Times-Herald, which I take. I think that is very true.

Then another thing, all newspapers are feeling it, your television news and your radio news. I pick up the paper in the morning and really there is no point in reading the war news because I listened so late at night. I curl up in bed with the

cats, and Ted Koppel and Charles Kuralt. I can't think of anything nicer.

Riess: That's nice. I should just end on that. It such a wonderful picture. [laughter]

Devlin: Yes, "happy as can be." I know I must sound terribly gushy and Pollyanna-ish about Vallejo, and the Times-Herald and the V.I.P. years. But that's the way I feel about them. I think it was Thomas Wolfe who said, "You can't go home again." But you can. I did.

I was born here, then lived in San Francisco and Berkeley, and I thought Berkeley was where I would always want to stay. But after coming to Vallejo in 1931, I knew this was where I belonged. The people, their friendliness, the climate, and most of all my newspaper associates, made life tremendously satisfying. I'm home. And I love it.

Transcriber: Sandy Tantalo
Final Typist: Suzanne Riess

Appendix A

The V.I.P.

Vallejo Independent Press

A weekly supplement to The Advertiser produced by striking employees of The Times-Herald in Vallejo until acceptable contract settlements enable them to end the strike and return to work.

VOL. 1 NO. 1 VALLEJO, CALIFORNIA AUGUST 16, 1978

Vallejo artist Wilma Saunders, left, shows two of the paintings she will have on display from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at Vallejo's second annual Street Artists Fair. More than 100 artists and craftspeople from throughout California have responded to the call to the fair issued by the Downtown Association. Four blocks on Georgia and Marin streets will be blocked off for the artists' booths. With Ms. Saunders are Downtown Association members James Bertozzi, coordinator of the Fair, Dee Lewis and Ruby Anderson. See story on Page 2. Photo by Gordon Sheffler.

Assessments Up Despite Prop. 13

By ROSA KWONG

The agony and ecstasy of tax relief continue to linger among Solano County property owners, despite passage of Proposition 13 which is supposed to bridge the range of feelings by making everyone happy with lower taxes.

County Chief Appraiser Tom Burns said his office is deluged with calls from homeowners who are dissppointed with the revised 1978-79 property assessment notices they have just received.

Misunderstanding of the new tax system, Burns said, has led many homeowners to expect a bigger tax break from Prop. 13.

On the other hand, the owner of a health food store in Upper Solano is so happy with her tax savings that she plans to give customers a rebate this week.

Bonnie Pimental, who bought the Nutrition Tree on Missouri Street in Fairfield two years ago, said she will sell sandwiches at a dollar each on Thursday and Friday. The sandwiches normally sell for $1.25 to $1.85.

Proposition 13 notwithstanding, Mrs. Pimental said the assessment on her store has gone up. But thanks to the new tax structure, she expects her 1978-79 property taxes to drop more than half from last year.

"It's a windfall for us. I don't know what the other businesses are doing, but I think the customers should share this (tax break)," she said.

Continued on Page 3

Seawolf Project Started At MI

By BOB LAWSON

The USS Seawolf, the oldest nuclear submarine still in service, recently arrived at Mare Island Naval Yard to begin a complete overhaul and refueling that will extend over the next two years.

The cost of the Seawolf servicing may be in excess of $80 million, undoubtedly the largest project the shipyard has undertaken since it became the Navy's major facility for such nuclear overhaul work some years ago.

In fact, this project's dollar-value probably exceeds most, if not all, of the more than 500 vessels from gunboats to nuclear subs constructed at Mare Island since the 1850s.

Commander Michael C. Tiernan, USN, is the commanding officer.

The Seawolf, now homeported at Mare Island, underwent an extensive overhaul and conversion several years ago in connection with the Deep Submergeoce Rescue Vehicle Programs.

There are 135 officers and men assigned to the submarine, 70 of them married. Most families and dependents of the crew have or will be relocating in Vallejo for the vessel's two-year stay.

The Seawolf, a nuclear attack submarine, was the

Continued on Page 2

Solano and Napa county news and social stories and information are being invited by the staff of the Vallejo Independent P r e s s. Reports may be made by contacting the staff by telephoning (707) 643-7607.

We're Back In Business

Hello, readers!

This is the first issue of a publication that was born for an unusual purpose — to retire again, eventually.

V.I.P. is written and prepared entirely by employees who are on strike against the Times-Herald daily newspaper. An editorial and facts about the strike appear elsewhere in the section.

This is a statement of our purpose and our goals.

First, we want to offer to

Continued on Page 13

Community Support Grows For Strikers

Times-Herald employees in five unions who struck the Donrey Media Group newspaper in Vallejo 57 days ago have received strong community support in their effort to obtain new contracts with the employer.

For the first time since the 88 workers in the Newspaper Guild, Typographical, Presaman's, Graphic Arts, and Mailers unions walked out of the plant, negotiating talks were scheduled this week with management.

The talks were to take place Tuesday, after this article went to press.

The unions had said they were prepared to resume negotiations at any time from the first day of the strike. After Mayor Florence Douglas appealed to both the unions and management to return to the bargaining table, the five unions reiterated their offer to negotiate in letters sent to federal mediator Bill Sabatino and the Times-Herald management two weeks ago.

Last week, Times-Herald, Inc., responded to the letter and the negotiation session was scheduled.

In the meantime, the striking employees have continued to picket the plant and to conduct a

Continued on Page 2

Is Big Quake Coming In Vallejo?

By JIM SANDERS

It often has been said the only sure things in life are death and taxes. Add something else to that list: earthquakes.

Statistics show an earthquake can be felt somewhere in the world every 10 minutes, and one in 50 of these will cause damage. Someday a quake will strike Vallejo. Bet on it.

"Every day the sun comes up, we know we're one day closer to a major earthquake in the Bay Area," says John Laye, emergency medical services coordinator for the Solano County Health Department.

"And Vallejo will take the brunt of it for Solano County. First of all, because a lot of the city is built on fill ground. Where we're eating lunch right now (waterfront) is gonna shake like hell.

"Also, there are parts of downtown Vallejo that lie on loosely compacted alluvium (a poor soil base). It's not like being on a rock, by any means."

The most severe tremor in the city's history occurred on March 30, 1898, along the Franklin fault, which is well defined in hills south of the Carquinez Straits.

The Vacaville Reporter gave this account of the quake: "At Vallejo, the shock did a great deal of damage. A number of chimneys were knocked down, and windows, glassware and crockery suffered. In several stores the goods were piled on the floor. Drugstores and saloons also suffered considerable loss.

"On Mare Island . . . the saw mill is flat on the ground, the walls of the naval hospital are badly shattered and every room damaged, and the roof on the northern end of the storehouse is down nearly to the ground. Other buildings were considerably damaged and the water main was broken."

The quake, estimated to have equalled 6.5 on the Richter Scale, caused an estimated $250,000 to $300,000 in damages.

The two biggest faults in Vallejo are the Franklin and the Southampton — the latter bisecting Southampton Bay and lying parallel to Columbus Parkway. Neither of these faults is considered active at present.

It should be noted, though, that an earthquake doesn't have to originate in Vallejo to cause damage in the

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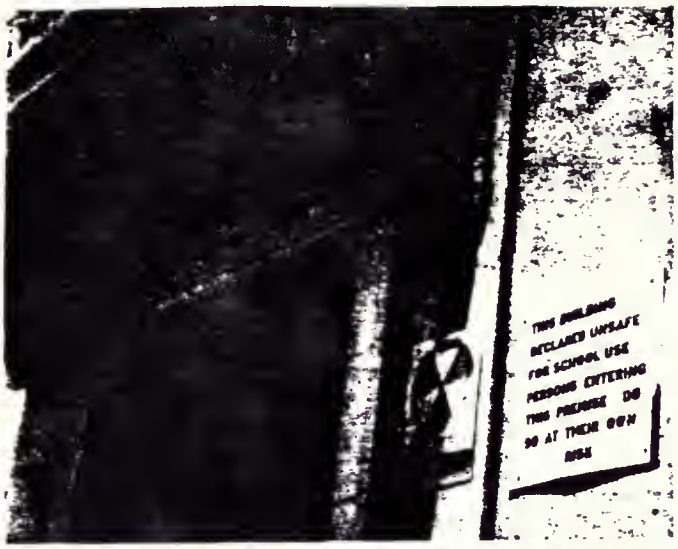

Signs such as this at the entrance of the Vallejo Adult Center (formerly McKinley Elementary School) are a reminder that Vallejo is part of "earthquake country." Emergency services officials feel it's not a question of if, but rather when, insofar as Vallejo's chances of being struck with a major earthquake are concerned.

Earthquake

From Page 1

city. The effects of any major quake are felt for thousands of miles.

When the famous San Francisco earthquake erupted on April 18, 1906, the Vallejo Daily Times reported many citizens here also felt some shaking:

"At the first shock many (Vallejoans) left their beds in their night clothes and fled to the streets and for most people there was little or no rest for the balance of the night."

If a major earthquake occurred either on the San Andreas or Hayward faults, both historically active and located to the southwest of Vallejo, experts feel there would be considerable loss locally.

In Solano County, Fire Marshal Gil Richardson and other experts have developed an emergency response plan to be used if an earthquake struck.

The countywide plan was initiated to consider how law enforcement, medical, civil service and other personnel could be utilized in such an emergency.

The plan assumes that an earthquake in Solano could trap some citizens in their homes, knock down power lines, cause gas leaks and fires, demolish buildings, damage sewer lines and destroy valuable medical supplies and equipment.

Some freeway overpasses and the approaches to the Carquinez seem likely to fall, making transportation difficult and traffic and crowd control measures vital.

In addition, the injured would have to be found and taken to hospitals; makeshift congregate care centers, in central locations such as school sites; or treated by mobile medical teams.

All of these factors pose problems for rescue workers. For more information on the county plan, you may call Richardson at 429-6506.

How do you make your home earthquake-proof? There are no foolproof methods. "If a man can build it, the earth can tear it down," says Chester W. Heck, county emergency services coordinator.

However, experts believe the safest houses are one-story wood frame structures with few windows and either a metal chemney or none at all.

The most dangerous are old buildings three stories or taller made of unreinforced masonry, with large windows or mirrors and tile or slate roofing.

"There's no question that an earthquake will strike here someday," John Laye warns from his health department office in Vallejo.

Seawolf

From Page 1

second atomic - powered vessel built for the Navy.

It was built by the General Dynamics at Groton, Conn., and commissioned in 1957. Originally powered by a sodium-cooled reactor, the sub was later equipped with a water-cooled reactor.

The Seawolf has been a pace-setter in the nuclear Navy since its commissioning.

Strike Drawing Support

From Page 1

de-circulation and de-advertising campaign for the duration of the strike.

Strikers have received more than 4,100 cards from subscribers who have canceled the paper voluntarily and strike officials estimate at least 2,000 others have canceled but have not informed the unions.

Times-Herald circulation at the time of the strike was more than 27,000. When the paper was purchased by Donrey from Sen. Luther Gibson four years ago, circulation was about 31,000.

The paper has continued to publish — first with Donrey management and other company personnel imported temporarily and later with so-called "permanent replacements." In addition, the company has utilized shifts of from 6 to 10 Wackenhut security guards 24 hours a day.

The strike has been non-violent in nature, with no strike-related damage reported to the plant or other company property and no injuries to strikers or persons working in the plant.

Downtown Artist Show Saturday

By BETTY MINAHEN

Artists and craftsmen from throughout California will convene in Vallejo Saturday to take part in the Downtown Fair.

More than 100 artists are expected to set up booths mid-street in the fair's central downtown location to display their wares.

Georgia Street from Sacramento to Sonoma and Marin Street between Hudson and Indian alleys will be closed to traffic during the colorful event which runs from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Art in action exhibits have been encouraged by the sponsors, and as fair-goers browse among the booths and displays they will observe work in progress on pastel portraits, acid - etched engravings, freestanding jig-saw puzzles, hand-cut brass belt buckles and fabrications on gold and silver.

Entertainment during the fair will begin at noon with a street disco dance produced by personnel from the D.T. Disco. The Minnesingers Band will play from 1-4 p.m., and will be joined at two by the Minnesinger chorus and dancers in a "Music in Motion" highlights show.

Applications to participate in the fair, accompanied by a $5 entry fee, must be received by the Downtown Association, 416 Georgia St., by 5 p.m. today.

Larwin Plaza Sidewalk Sale

A Gigantic Sidewalk sale will be featured at the Larwin Plaza Shopping Center Friday & Saturday Aug. 19-20. Jo Ann Bank President of the Merchants Association announced that special buys for back to school will be displayed by most all Larwin Merchants.

Special tables on the mall will also feature odds and ends with savings up to 50 per cent and more. Plenty of no limit free parking is always available. The Shopping Center is located at Sonoma Blvd. and Redwood Street.

On The Line

By MICHAEL LENGYEL

A few notes from the picket line:

The first night, darkness, wind whipping up Maryland Street from Mare Island Strait. "We can provide any service management wants," Bob Harper is saying, "even a complete kitchen. Of course, they don't need that here."

Harper is from the Burlingame office of Wackenhut Corp., third largest security organization in the country. He stepped in to direct the local operation after another Wackenhut official who prepared the strike plans months ago suffered a heart attack.

Dave Caffoe, a cigaret dangling from his lips, leads a half dozen security guards into the building. They carry uniforms and suitcases. Caffoe is general manager of the Times-Herald. He's been responsible for the newspaper since Donrey Media Group bought it in 1973.

Rented vans and stationwagons converge on the plant, lawyers, corporate executives and strikebreakers pour in. Soon they are all inside, guarded, boarded and buttoned up, with the building and machinery intact and the resources of a far-flung conglomerate at their command.

We are outside on the street.

The rising sun turns the beige wall of the plant on Everett Alley pink. Teddy Compoc laughs when he sees us as he comes out of his home. He is 79. His house is a work of art. He tells us stories. He turns over two big flower pots for us to sit on and rest.

People wave as they drive by on Maryland Street. Boxes of doughnuts, a pot of chili, cake mysteriously appearly in the strike trailer. A milkman gives us a box of Eskimo Pies. A news vendor gives us copies of the Oakland newspaper.

We are not alone.

The parking lot is full of cars. The license plates span the country, Michigan, Colorado, Texas, Florida, New York, Nevada, California. Donrey has assembled its new work force.

The strike is 30 days old. Sometimes we get depressed. It shows in our eyes. Death and illness have not left us alone. We get confused about the date, the month.

But what a sturdy group we turn out to be! We discover strength in each other. Fellow workers we hardly knew reveal themselves as magnificent human beings.

How can anyone be downcast when Cal Stevens, printer and veteran of two wars, is so indomitable from his wheelchair? Max Johnson, the Black brothers, Jim and Joe, Patrick McHale, Gene Simmons, Greg King, Rudy Gomez, Karen Martin, Addie Weekley, Betty Minahen, the list is endless, strong and good people all.

Marion Devlin

One of my favorite anecdotes that I've repeated frequently concerns the then young son of Ed and Ginnie Case, longtime Vallejoans who have lived in Napa in recent years.

Tommy was quite a small boy at the time. As I recall Ed was away on business, and Ginnie, whose third child was due in only a very few weeks, decided to make pancakes for Tommy and his big sister Sally, for dinner.

As the last pancakes were flipped and served, she lifted the heavy castiron frying pan to swing it from the stove to the sink. Just then Tommy dashed through the kitchen and the pan caught him squarely in the mouth, loosening a few front teeth, cutting his lip, and leaving Ginnie in a state of near hysterics.

Yes, the teeth were saved; the lip healed without a scar, and today Tom is a handsome young husband and father. Whether he still likes pancakes is something I never learned.

A week or so later Tom's teacher asked the class to write a composition on something interesting that had happened to them the week before.

Imagine her shock when she picked up his paper and read: "Last week I had an interesting experience. My mother hit me in the teeth with a frying pan."

Now nobody asked me to write a similar composition but if they did I might start it by saying: "For the last two months I've had an interesting experience. I've been on strike."

Had anyone told me a year or even six months ago, that I would be on strike against the Times-Herald . . . the newspaper where I have spent 47 happy and rewarding years . . . I would have scoffed.

But they say that a sure sign of old age is inflexibility, and there must be a dash of Peter Pan in me because here I am after close to a half century writing in another publication, and I call that being flexible.

I can't imagine anyone WANTING a strike. A strike is born out of desperation and frustration, a fact I had never realized until I found myself involved in this one.

But since I'm in it through choice (I never could have chosen otherwise) it has come as a pleasant surprise to learn that there are very rewarding aspects. Yes, I miss the weekly paychecks, and also the daily contacts with old friends and new ones who dropped into the office with their news stories.

To compensate, there has been a deepening of the long established friendships with my Times-Herald associates, and a chance to become closer to those with whom I have worked for years who until now were only casual acquaintances.

I work at the strike headquarters where I feel quite at home with Jan Gaston Stockstill and Mary Ann Davis Magnuson, both members of the Times-Herald Panorama staff in pre-strike days, and both second generation members of the VALLEJO Times-Herald family. Jan's father, the late Orvin B. Gastoo, was my first editor, and Mary Ann's mother, Jeanette Stone Davis, started her newspaper career with me when she finished school.

Jan always beats me to the office in the morning and makes a beeline to the kitchen to get the coffee brewing. The men claim she makes the BEST coffee ever. When she was away one morning and I substituted they rewarded me by saying it was very good. I got the message.

Mary Ann and Martha King relieve us for the afternoon duty. Martha usually accompanied by her two pretty young daughters, Amy and Christine, who come equipped with their lunch boxes, paper dolls, coloring books and assorted toys, and settle down quietly in a corner for the afternoon. I find it reassuring to know that if I get caught up with my work (it hasn't happened yet) I can always join them for some fun with paper dolls and games.

The two young Magnusons, Michele and Jamey, also have accompanied their mother here a time or two. In fact, the strike is definitely a family affair. Wives have joined their husbands in the picket line . . . Jack Dailey's Dorothy, Jim Quinn's Gloria, Bill Lorenzen's Nan, Bob Lawson's Donna, among others . . . and husbands of Gale Bloom, Kathy Lake and Cathy Evangelista appear there regularly.

Jean Hanson's daughter, Kelly, has filled in at the

Continued on Page 8

Inquiring Reporter

Your Duties While On Strike Against The Times-Herald?

By JAN STOCKSTILL

Bob Carnes, printer: I am primarily on a team canvassing the community for subscription cancellations. We do one hour of picket duty before we go out to knock on doors. I've gained a lot of confidence in the outcome of this dispute from going door to door. Often people ask us to come in and sit down and talk—they want to hear about the issues and hear our side of the story.

Cathy Evangelista, dispatch clerk: I am a picket on the 8 p.m. to midnight shift five days a week. I was placed on this shift so that my husband can babysit with our three youngsters after he comes home from work. When we have daytime meetings I bring my baby daughter Stephanie along, as it is not easy to come up with babysitter money when you are on strike.

Pat McHale, pressman: I am a member of a cancellation soliciting team composed of various union members in this labor dispute. People are receptive once they are made aware of our problems in coming to terms with Donrey. The minority groups have given us overwhelming support.

Gale Bloom, classified salesman: I'm a member of one of four teams working on subscription cancellations. We spend four hours each day contacting subscribers to talk to them about the situation now confronting the union workers. We find most people very interested in discussing the potential impact on the community if local workers lose their right to belong to labor unions due to the efforts of large corporations. Response has been outstanding.

Marion Devlin

Continued from Page 6

headquarters when we're rushed, and Roger Warnock's daugher, Debbie, is one of our hardest workers, on the picket line and at the office.

Bob Jeffers, our strike coordinator, had always been a good friend at the newspaper, but I would never have known just how great he is if we hadn't been thrown together each day with our mutual headaches and laughs. One morning this week when I was deep in my own personal worries and unhappiness, Bob arrived and greeted me with a big bearhug and kiss that told me better than all the words in the world that he understood and sympathized. My eyes misted with gratitude.

There are so many more. Dave Berooio, my close friend and coworker for 43 years (I consider him a Johnny-Come-Lately since I beat him to the Times-Herald by four years) adds his own particular brand of enthusiasm, nonsense and good sense to our daily chores.

And Jim Sanders, who provides us with daily laughs, is another favorite character. The other day he curled up on the office floor in a sunny corner and slept soundly for an hour or so through all the racket of typewriters, four telephones and conversation. He didn't feel well, he explained later, because he "had drunk too many cokes."

There is a camaraderie between us we never have felt before, even though we would have claimed we were closely associated. Yes, our desks may be filled with replacements, but they CANNOT replace US. We ARE the Vallejo Times-Herald family, and that's a claim we make with justifiable pride.

V.I.P.
Vallejo Independent Press

A weekly supplement to The Advertiser produced by striking employees of The Times-Herald in Vallejo until acceptable contract settlements enable them to end the strike and return to work.

VOL. 1 NO. 2 VALLEJO, CALIFORNIA AUGUST 23, 1978

Times-Herald Strike Headquarters has been moved to 316 Napa St., a vacant store and apartment adjacent to the struck newspaper plant. Starting the move were, from left, Gale Bloom, Roger Warnock, Bob Jeffers, and Loana Campo. Strike headquarters was formerly at the Casa de Vallejo. — V.I.P. Photo by Gordon Shaffer.

Downtown Area On Rise Again?

By BARBARA HUNTER

Vallejo's Downtown — which one audience member last week likened to London after the blitz, complete with craters and rubble where sagging old buildings have been demolished — could rise again as a city asset, an enthusiastic City Council has been told.

The majority of the council at the special session appeared agreeable to moving ahead immediately with a resolution of support and other steps called for by the National Development Council. Vice - Mayor Rod Boschee, however, advocated waiting for the return from Vallejo's sister city of Akashi, Japan, of Mayor Florence E. Douglas, before taking concrete action. Councilman John Cunningham was also absent and excused from last Thursday's revitalization meeting.

A glowing picture of a refurbished and financially solvent downtown sector was painted by Scott Rodde, director of the National Development Council, who described how the Neighborhood Business Revitalization Program of the Small Business Administration works. With a slide presentation, Rodde showed how Downtown Vallejo might rise again, much as a similar but larger facelift was conducted in Oldtown Baltimore or — closer to home — the restoration of

Continued on Page 2

Concerned Citizens Organize

The recently - formed Committee of Concerned Citizens — formed to show support for striking members of Donrey Media's Times-Herald — will meet at 7:30 p.m. Thursday to the John F. Kennedy Library meeting room.

The meeting was jointly announced by Rev. Hugh Stewart, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church, Mrs. Lyde Yoder, and Mrs. Grace Merkling.

Striking Workers Out, T-H Negotiator Says

Even if negotiations lead to a settlement of new contracts between striking employees and the Times-Herald, the strikers would not all return to their jobs, management told the unions last week in the first bargaining meeting since the strike began.

"We have a commitment to the people hired since the strike started," said Melvin Anderson, the company's hired negotiator, referring to the scores of strikebreakers who have been hired for what management advertised as "permanent positions" very soon after the strike began.

(By comparison, Safeway and Lucky stores have been seeking "temporary" replacements for their striking employees, indicating they are looking down the road toward an eventual settlement and return to work by strikers).

"I think this shows that Donrey Media, owner of the Times - Herald, doesn't intend to settle this strike or bring the striking employees back," said

Continued on Page 2

New Construction Near $10 Million

New major construction work valued at $9,978,054 has been approved by City Building Official Gene Widen.

The largest single project is the construction of a $600,000 addition to the Safeway Store at 702 Lincoln Rd. West in a permit granted Safeway Stores Inc., of Fremont.

Another major commercial development is represented in a $450,000 permit issued to Avery Greene of Vallejo for the construction of a building at 800 Admiral Callaghan Lane. The structure will contain a sales office, a service area, a parts and body shop and a car wash.

Wideo also gave permission to the First Assembly of God Church, 210 Locust Dr., to build a $400,000 gymnasium and youth center.

Among new residential developments authorized by Widen are 35 dwellings to be erected by M & W Co. No. 3 of Pleasant Hill in Seaport Subdivision No. 2 at an outlay of $1,587,344.

In addition Citation Builders of San Leandro has been given permission to construct 66 new dwellings in Woodbridge Subdivision No. 2 at an investment of $2,737,718 and 68 new homes in Springtree Subdivision at a cost of another $2,001,150.

Hoffmann Co. of Concord has issued permits to erect homes in College Hills Subdivision No. 2 at a cost $1,712,370 and Young American Homes of Rohnert Park was authorized 38 apartment units valued at $89,472 at North Camino Alto and Sereno Drive.

Probe May Bring TV Rate Change

By MICHAEL LENGYEL

Vallejoans forced to subscribe to a movie channel in order to receive cable television service may get some relief soon through the efforts of the California attorney general's office.

The practice, begun by North Bay Cable Television Co. Inc. on May 1, violates the state's Business and Professions Code, according to Wayne M. Liao, deputy attorney general.

Liao is investigating the matter in response to a June 12 request from the Vallejo City Council.

A refund to those paying for the mandatory movie channel under protest, however, appears unlikely, it has been estimated that North Bay billed Vallejo subscribers for more than $30,000 a month in fees from the allegedly illegal practice.

"The thing that I'm

Continued on Page 2

Picking Up The Pieces

An everyday occurrence, perhaps, but this mishap at the intersection of Solano Ave., Amador St., and Benicia Rd. last week was enough to make you cry in your beer. The unidentified beer truck driver cleans away the debris after part of his precious cargo fell off. — V.I.P. Photo by Ray Binich.

Solano and Napa county news and social stories and information are being invited by the staff of the Vallejo Independent Press. Reports may be made by contacting the staff by telephoning (707) 643-7607.

Strike Talks Falter

From Page 1

Doug Cuthbertson, assistant executive secretary of the Newspaper Guild and director of the strike.

Anderson told union representatives during the two - hour meeting at Terry's Restaurant, with Federal mediator Maggie Jacobson present, that in event of a settlement the striking employees would be rehired, one by one, only as openings occurred.

The unions — the Guild, Typographical Union, Mailers, Pressmen and Graphic Arts — told management on behalf of the 88 people out on strike that all strikers would return to their jobs . . . or none would. Union spokesperson Leon Olson said that a condition of settling the eight - week - old strike would be that all strikers return to their jobs.

When the Times - Herald refused to agree, the meeting ended. No further meetings had been scheduled at V.I.P. press time.

Striking employees continued their campaign in the community to enlist support of subscribers and advertisers against the Times - Herald. Subscribers are being asked, in door - to - door contact and through many organizations and unions in the Solano - Napa counties area, to cancel their Times-Herald subscriptions until the strike is settled. Subscribers who have discovered that the Times-Herald chooses to ignore many cancellations have nonetheless refused to pay for any papers delivered after their cancellation slips, postcards or phone calls have been transmitted to the Times-Herald.

Two incidents last week by persons connected with the Times - Herald angered employees on the picket line.

Striker Fred Budde was struck repeatedly in the face by a man who had given a strikebreaker a ride to the plant, according to witnesses on the picket line.

Police officers later took reports from Budde and from the Frank Warren Fay Jr., of 1531 Detroit Ave., Concord, identified by Budde as his assailant. Strike leaders said that a complaint was going to be filed with the district attorney's office.

The following day a female strikebreaker, harassed by strikers as she left the Times - Herald building, reportedly aimed her red Volkswagen at picket Wes Gibson and swerved it all the way across Maryland street into oncoming traffic lanes.

Gibson, a striking photographer and Guild member, filed a report with the Vallejo Police Department and was investigating a possible complaint with the district Attorney. The Volkswagen was registered to an owner in Pasadena, police said.

The Solano Hotel and Frank's Cafe, on the 500 block of Marin St., are ready for demolition in the downtown revitalization project. The old Times-Herald building used to stand to the left of the hotel. — VIP Photo.

Downtown Work Studied

From Page 1

Old Sacramento, a former blighted area now booming with picturesque restaurants and a variety of shops.

Prior to passage of California's Proposition 13, funds for such projects were in the local public tax dollar domain, but now private industry must be encouraged to increase its role in such projects, Rodde indicated.

The "secred word" has now changed from "redevelopment" to "revitalization" with the federal Small Business Administration, Economic Development Agency, and Housing and Urban Development continuing to play active roles in funding such projects under interagency agreements. But "the days of mass urban renewal are definitely over," and future projects are "going to have to be spurred by private interests," Rodde stated.

While the government-funded National Development Council offers an advisory and resource role in guidance through the maze of such agreements, Vallejo will still need "an economic development professional who can devote 100 per cent of time to making this happen," Rodde said of local revitalization plans.

Who this would be is still moot, but Curtis Grindahl, Vallejo development coordinator, has been rumored for the post.

Another "must" in revitalization will be "demand process among merchants" to fix up their property, with "mandatory design standards and participation" by all, Rodde warned. When Councilman Anthony Intintoli Jr. asked about the word "mandatory," Rodde said local merchants must follow a unified design theme for facades, with 100 per cent participation.

School Signups Start In Vallejo

Parents with children eligible to attend kindergarten this fall may register them from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Registrations are now being accepted at Highland, Mare Island, Beverly Hills, Cave, Cooper, Federal Terrace, Loma Vista, Steffan Manor and Widenmann elementary schools.

Parents can now register youngsters at Davidson, Farragut, Grant and Lincoln elementary schools.

Curry Elementary School registration begins Aug. 24.

Pennycook, Mini, Highland and Mare Island schools offer both calendar sessions.

Children who will reach their fifth birthday no later than Dec. 1, 1978, are eligible to attend kindergarten. The minimum age is set by the State Education Code.

Parents must bring the child's birth certificate or proof of birth and record of immunization. Immunization should include polio, measles (Rubeola), diptheria, whooping cough and tetanus for each child being registered.

California State Law requires that students be immunized against these diseases before admission to school unless they have had the disease or the parent files a medical examination exemption form with the school.

Students will be registered but will not be placed in a classroom when school begins until all health records have been completed and returned.

Counselors for junior and senior highs are available Aug. 25, at Springstowne Junior High and Hogan Senior High and Aug. 28 at Franklin and Vallejo Junior Highs and Vallejo Senior High.

Parents not sure of the attendance boundaries for a particular school, or need additional information, may call the Instructional division, 644-8921, Ext. 52.

More On Cable TV

From Page 1

interested in is that the current practice stop," Liao said.

The state, he said, does not subscribe to the service and so has suffered no damages itself and therefore has no standing to sue for damages.

Liao said the Cartwright Act, the state law governing the matter, is similar to federal anti-trust law and permits treble damages under certain circumstances, usually in price fixing, for damaged parties.

Liao outlined the state's contention that North Bay was violating the law with the mandatory movie channel in a June 21 letter to David H. Smart, general manager of the cable TV firm at 1808 Springs Rd. in Vallejo.

Liao said he received a response from North Bay's parent company, Donrey Media Group Inc., recounting the history of what the Arkansas - based conglomerate did in the rate matter.

The deputy attorney general said he has been researching the matter to see how Donrey's explanation fits in with existing case law.

Donrey also owns the Times-Herald newspaper in Vallejo, which was struck June 20 by five unions representing most employees at the newspaper. The newspaper promoted the movie channel in a Page One article March 9 which failed to mention the rate structure.

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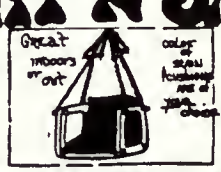

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Inquiring Reporter

Are You Happy These Days With The Times-Herald?

By JAN STOCKSTILL

Margueritta Burke, owner Wheeler Printing: No. There is not enough local coverage. I really miss the women's section, particularly Marion Devlin's column. And the 20 years ago column — I always enjoyed reading the local names in that feature. I haven't seen the Times-Herald for awhile. I just don't read it anymore.

Harry Gray, historian, retired college instructor: I haven't read the Times-Herald regularly for the past several weeks, but I have seen a few issues here and there and they were not at all satisfying. The Times-Herald does not reflect the atmosphere that this city should. I miss Dave Beronio's column, the good reporting of the regular staff, and the editorial page.

Mary Ann Winters, Benicia attorney: I cancelled my subscription to the Times-Herald. Since the strike began, the paper hasn't contained the local news that people want to read. I miss the society staff and the personal touches of those writers. I miss knowing that the people reporting the news are a part of the community.

Rev. Hugh Stewart, pastor, First Presbyterian Church: No, I'm not. We rely on the San Francisco Chronicle for world and national news and the Times-Herald for the local scene. The Times-Herald doesn't do that well on national news and currently isn't doing a good job for Vallejo. I have friends who have submitted local cultural news that never appears. They are increasing coverage of Napa and Fairfield and ignoring Vallejo.

Robert Allgood, secretary, Vallejo Downtown Association: No, I am not. I miss the knowledgeable reporting of local news that the permanent staff was able to give us. The well-qualified regular staff had certain insights into what was happening within the community, and I looked forward to their reporting. The current staff members don't have the background for the job. There is no comparison between today's newspaper and the publication of two months ago.

THURSDAY

Vallejo Independent Press

V.I.P.

VOL. 5, NO. 143 | 15 CENTS | THURSDAY, MARCH 3, 1983 | ONE SECTION, 8 PAGES

Queen's Silver Lining Amid Stormy Arrival

By MARION DEVLIN

Apparently unperturbed by the stormy weather that has been with her ever since her arrival in California, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II of England arrived in San Francisco by plane rather than by royal yacht shortly after 4:30 yesterday afternoon.

Accompanied by His Royal Highness, the Duke of Edinburgh, and America's First Lady, Nancy Reagan, the Queen arrived on Air Force Two at the San Francisco Coast Guard ramp, an area north of San Francisco Airport restricted yesterday to the official welcoming party and news media with special credentials for the occasion.

Queen Elizabeth, recognized as the richest woman in the world, is a small woman, five feet four inches, 119 pounds. As she stood at the top of the landing platform she paused for a few seconds, looking somewhat grim and forbidding. Then as she descended, she smiled, and was transformed into a very pretty woman.

As she walked down the sparkling red carpet, unrolled seconds before she left the plane, she was welcomed by Mayor Diane Feinstein, Cyril Magnin, Charlotte Maillard and others in the official party. The Queen was dressed for the weather, rather than for style, high boots, a practical tan raincoat that showed glimpses of a blue skirt, a brimmed shiny red straw hat, tilted up at the front to show her perfect English complexion and her face framed in chestnut hair. Dark gloves, a furled umbrella, and yes, the favored two-strap handbag were carried.

Prince Philip, tall, slim and elegant, followed close behind, and so did Mrs. Reagan, in a royal blue coatdress with red scarf and lapels.

Unbelievably, seconds after the plane had landed there was a very faint glimmer of sun through the pewter-colored skies, followed by a rainbow. But almost at once the drenching rain returned, and the official party was whisked into a motorcade of shiny limousines for the ride to San Francisco.

Never have I stood for so long in such heavy rain. Wes Gibson and I went first to the St. Francis press room where our official press badges bearing the crossed flags of the United States and Great Britain awaited us.

Then down to the United States Coast Guard Station where we were checked by security two or three times before we parked. Next we boarded one of the large press buses, joining reporters, television and newspaper cameramen from England, New York and wayside points which transported us to one of the huge hangars at the base.

There we got off, were given a quick body check and our handbags and camerabags went through a metal detector, then back on our bus for the landing area where Air Force Two was to arrive. In the interim, the press buses were given a thorough search by security guards.

At our final destination there was a wooden platform set up for cameras and television crews, but no seats and no overhead covering. Water came to the tops of our shoes as we stood in the pelting rain for perhaps a half-hour.

Then someone on a walkie-talkie passed the word: "She's on the ground," and after perhaps another ten minutes the big plant glided into view and came to a stop exactly in line with the press platform.

Out came the crew, then an official or two, and finally the small figure of Her Majesty appeared at the top of the landing steps, and the red carpet was unrolled in all its pristine freshness.

Earlier plans for the royal yacht, the Britannia, 5,769 tons and described as the world's largest yacht, to sail under the Golden Gate bridge at 8:15 this morning and for a royal welcome when the Queen and her entourage stepped ashore at Pier 50 were abandoned early yesterday when storm conditions were considered too serious for the voyage up the California coast. The Queen is described as not being the best sailor in stormy weather.

Instead, the royal party with Mrs. Reagan as a guest flew to San Francisco from Southern California and spent last night at the St. Francis Hotel. They are expected to remain there tonight.

Undoubtedly the unexpected free evening must have been welcome to the Queen and Prince Philip, who have undergone an exhausting round of official engagements since their arrival in San Diego last Saturday morning, for the Queen's first visit to the Western United States.

What is described as the tightest security San Francisco has ever known has been in the planning for weeks, and one authority said yesterday it was virtually wall-to-wall security. Secret Service sharpshooters are posted on San Francisco rooftops in all of the areas the Queen will visit.

Besides the 30 Secret Service agents permanently stationed in San Francisco, 200 or more agents are said to be in the Bay Area, and they form the core of the protective force. Thousands of other uniformed and plainclothes police and federal agents are on hand, as well as a strong military presence.

Today will be a busy one for the Queen and Prince Philip. Mayor Feinstein will welcome them officially at a reception for 1,500 guests in Davies Symphony Hall. A state dinner will be hosted tonight by President and Mrs. Reagan for 250 at the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum. Tomorrow Queen Elizabeth will give a small dinner for 50 guests on the Britannia, followed by a reception for 200. The royal yacht is expected to arrive in the early hours before dawn tomorrow.

Although it was earlier announced that the royal couple and Mrs. Reagan planned to remain in the hotel Wednesday, they showed up later at Trader Vic's, the original of an international chain of restaurants by that name, dining in a private room with a party of 50 on lamb in peanut sauce and rum ice cream with praline sauce.

When Air Force 2, carrying the Queen and her immediate party put down at the Coast Guard facilities near the airport, it was followed by four other aircraft in the royal entourage. After the official welcoming ceremony with Mayor Feinstein officiating, the motorcade left for San Francisco and the St. Francis Hotel, keeping a fast pace with no stops.

At the hotel the royal party is occupying 46 rooms on the 31st floor, which necessitated asking some hotel residents to move out to make room for the unexpected visitors.

Appendix D

Vallejo Independent Press

V.I.P.

VOL. 6, No. 203 15 CENTS FRIDAY, AUG. 3, 1984 500 ONE SECTION, 12 PAGES

'LAST ISSUE' TODAY FOR V.I.P.

The Vallejo Independent Press is suspending publication with today's issue because of an acute cash flow problem that left the newspaper nearly $15,000 short of immediate cash needs, Roger Warnock, V.I.P. general manager, announced Thursday.

Unless local investors are willing to step forward to take over the operation, the assets of The V.I.P. will be liquidated over the next several months by a skeleton crew to satisfy all the newspaper's obligations, Warnock said.

First and foremost, the boys and girls who deliver the paper will be paid fully, ahead of any other obligations, Warnock said.

"Our accounts receivable, the money owed to us for advertising sales, amounts to $89,000 but we don't have that income in cash to meet our own payrolls and other immediate obligations," Warnock said.

As a strike newspaper founded six years ago, The V.I.P. was unable to borrow from banks to tide it over cash flow problems.

Warnock said cash flow problems, plaguing the newspaper since its reserves were used up during the recent recession, became insurmountable this week with convergence of a series of immediate obligations.

Because of the depth of community support for the newspaper, Warnock said the shut-down was ordered with great reluctance and regret as the most prudent step now.

"I sincerely hope the newspaper can be revived by the people of Vallejo so that Vallejo doesn't become a one-newspaper city," Warnock said.

The office of the newspaper will remain open during normal business hours for the time being.

Warnock broke the news to his staff at a general meeting at 3:30 p.m. Thursday in the former mom-and-pop grocery store pressed into service as a newspaper office when the paper was founded as a weekly Aug. 16, 1978 by members of five unions on strike against Donrey's Times-Herald.

"We gave it a damn good shot," Warnock said in explaining the cash flow problems to about three dozen employees at Thursday's meeting.

Editor Don Gleason commended the outside hires who joined the strikers in producing the newspaper.

"You've been superb," Gleason said, and the hires were given a round of applause by their co-workers who conducted the longest strike in Vallejo history after setting up picket lines on June 20, 1978 in an attempt to renew their contracts with new owners of the Times-Herald.

The contracts had expired 2½ years earlier. Negotiations for three years failed to settle efforts by Donrey to "gut the contract," a union spokesman said, by such demands as $100 a week pay cuts in some departments. Donrey's Times-Herald remains today on the "we don't patronize" unfair list of the California AFL-CIO.

After the half-hour meeting, the newspaper staff went about producing the final edition with the elan and even exuberance that characterized the six-year life of The V.I.P.

"We just went through another historic experience, the death of a newspaper," Sports Editor Bob Lawson said. "I think I'll go in the john and cry." But he didn't.

Warnock announced that subscribers who paid in advance will be mailed refunds later. He said the fourth annual V.I.P.-Budweiser Bathtub Regatta, scheduled Sunday, Aug. 12, will go on as scheduled.

V.I.P. carriers have just begun collecting from subscribers for delivery the past month of July, and part of their pay is dependent upon receiving payment from subscribers, Warnock said.

Warnock said he intends to conserve the assets of the newspaper for at least two weeks to determine if local investors wish to revive it.

The assets include a Daily King press, acquired in 1979 with community help through the V.I.P. Press Club.

Warnock said crews will be out collecting all the money owed to the newspaper so that its own debts can be fully paid off.

The V.I.P. began as a once-a-week insert in another publication, grew to a five-day-a-week daily in 1981 and cut back to three times a week last March.

EXTRA! EXTRA! EXTRA!

Vallejo
Times-Herald

Friday

October 27, 1989
113th Year, No 300 25¢

Happy Birthday Marion Devlin!

By Jeanette Davis

VALLEJO — The long and exciting newspaper career of Marion Devlin will be fondly recalled by approximately 350 friends and relatives gathered at Vallejo Elks Club this evening on the occasion of her 80th birthday.

The date also marks the 121st anniversary of the birth of Judge Frank R. Devlin, father of the honored guest, who was one of the founders and charter members of Vallejo Elks Lodge 559, serving as its first exalted ruler. A special tribute to Judge Devlin will be presented by the Past Exalted Rulers Association during the program.

"A Toast to Marion Devlin" is the theme of the event, and appropriate newspaper decorations of black and white with touches of red (for "read all over") will be featured on the dinner tables and around the banquet room.

One of Vallejo's favorite native daughters, Marion's memorable career has always been devoted to local people and causes. During her many years as women's news editor of Vallejo Times-Herald, her Panorama sections were judged "Best in the State" ten times by the California Newspaper Publishers Association.

In addition to hometown activities, Vallejo's first lady of the press brought the social events of Europe to her pages with on the spot coverage of major stories such as the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, and the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana in 1981, both times with official press credentials. She met with Queen Elizabeth again when the Monarch visited San Francisco in 1983, accompanied by her husband, Prince Philip. She also was received by Queen Juliana of The Netherlands and Queen Fredericka of Greece, Princess Margaret and her husband, Lord Snowdon, and Princess Alexandra and her husband, the Honorable Mr. Ogilvie, during their official visits to San Francisco.

Other interviews covered in by-line stories for Vallejo readers were those with two First Ladies, Eleanor Roosevelt and Lady Bird Johnson, and two others who were to become First Ladies — Mamie Eisenhower and Nancy Reagan.

Marion's visit with Mrs. Roosevelt occurred during World War II when Captain Pete Owens, commanding officer of the Naval Hospital at Mare Island, invited her as the only other woman and only press representative to attend a luncheon for the First Lady. Her interview with Mrs. Johnson took place when Marion was a member of the press entourage accompanying her to San Simeon on an overnight visit hosted by then Governor Pat Brown.

The interview with Mamie Eisenhower was conducted at a rally at Vallejo's waterfront park while Ike was campaigning for the Republican nomination for President. And Nancy Reagan invited Marion to a garden luncheon at the Reagans' Sacramento home while her husband was Governor of California. Each of these interviews brought widespread attention when they appeared under Marion's by-line.

Throughout her career which began in 1931 when she accepted a position from Luther E. Gibson to be society editor of Vallejo Evening Chronicle, Marion interviewd numerous movie stars and other celebrities including Mary Pickford, Clark Gable, Gregory Peck, Pat O'Brien, Shirley Temple, Louella Parsons and Max Baer.

The honored guest is a charter member of Soroptimist International of Vallejo; Lilac Branch, Children's Hospital Medical Center of Northern California; Vallejo Council 1, Navy League of the United States, and Vallejo Naval and Historical Museum. She also is a member of Solano County Republican Women, Vallejo College Women's Club and the Board of Directors of Vallejo Merchants Association, and holds honorary lifetime memberships in Lilac Branch, the California Congress of Parents and Teachers and Sutter Solano Hospital Guild. In addition she is a past president of Soroptimist and College Women's Clubs.

Marion also received an honorary membership in Vallejo-Benicia Council of Beta Sigma Phi and was named "Woman of the Year" in 1978 by that organization, becoming the first local recipient of the award. During the presentation ceremonies, it was stated that "Miss Devlin's unexcelled women's news, along with her social, fraternal, civic and charitable service has made Solano County a better place to live."

Another honor came from Soroptimist International of Vallejo when members presented Marion with a "Women Helping Women" award, recalling that from the beginning of her career, she "undertook a campaign to elevate the importance of women in the community."

One more career highlight took place when Marion was honored by Lilac Branch of Children's Hospital at a recognition luncheon which featured her being named an active patron.

During her years as women's editor of the Times-Herald, she also was called upon to cover "hard " news assignments and in that capacity she enjoyed public relations flights to the East Coast as a guest of the U.S. Army, Navy and Air Force. She was a member of a small press group on a flight of the Army Statesmen V.I.P. plane, and was one of three women who were guests on the maiden flight of the Navy's Constitution, along with 90 male passengers. Another honor came when Marion was invited as the only reporter on the flight of an Air Evacuation plane taking war wounded from the Korean front to service hospitals near their homes. This assignment included writing a series of articles following some of the injured to their respective hospitals.

Marion was born on this date in 1909 at the family home at 901 Georgia St. The Devlins moved to San Francisco in 1915 and then to Berkeley in 1920. She is a graduate of Anna Head School and the University of California with a major in journalism. Her two sisters, both deceased, were Mrs. Henri de Carbonel (Ruth Devlin) who taught in Vallejo Schools, and Mrs. Chester Clement (Doris Devlin) who served as editor of the Panorama Section's Navy Page. Their mother, Mrs. Devlin, the former Agnes Erb of Napa, was the first woman ever to hold the position of deputy superintendent of schools in Napa County at the turn of the century.

Let's sing a toast to Marion Devlin

(To the tune of "On The Sunny Side of the Street")

Grab your coat and get your hat
Gotta meet a special lady
This will be a treat
'cause it's someone you gotta meet.

Now we will tell you that —
That her name is known to many
Devlin is the name
And the newspaper was her game.

She did society
With grace and dignity
She was the cat's meow
Has style — and how!

She did gobs of goody things
For a lot of local gentry
Great publicity
For the likes of you and me.

And so we toast you Marion D.
With great propriety
With all sincerity
We toast you —
And that's who!

We're all glad to be your friends
And to know a classy lady
Every time we meet
It's the sunny side of the street!

Lyrics by Ruby Beckmeyer and Marie Mathews

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